

The meeting outlined below was originally scheduled for Monday, January 14, 2008. Due to the snow storm, it has been rescheduled to:

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17 2008

CRANSTON HIGH SCHOOL WEST AUDITOROIIUM

80 METROPOLITAN AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 5:30 P.M.

PUBLIC SESSION: 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

The regular monthly meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at Cranston High School West in the auditorium with the following members present: Mr. Archetto, Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Stycos, Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway, and Mr. Traficante. Also present were Mr. Scherza, Mr. Nero, Mr. Votto, and Mr. Balducci.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway and unanimously carried that the members adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel and PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation (possible litigation – Caruolo Action.)

Chairman Traficante reconvened public session at 7:06 p.m. He

noted that no vote was taken in Executive Session.

The roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

I. Executive Session Minutes Sealed – January 14, 2008

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried that the January 14, 2008 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

**II. Minutes of Previous Meetings Approved: December 6, 2007;
December 17, 2007**

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried that the December 6, 2007 and December 17, 2007 meeting minutes be approved.

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously adopted to take the Agenda out of order.

Chairman Traficante explained to the public in attendance that the School Committee had suspended the rules in order to follow the following procedure. The committee will

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go to the consent agenda first prior to discussing the 6th grade issue.

Following that will be public acknowledgements, Chairperson communications, Superintendent communications, School Committee member communications followed by public hearings. The committee would allow students to speak first on all agenda and non-agenda items followed by members of the general public for agenda matters only. The committee would appreciate if Cranston residents would be allowed to speak first and those people who did not get an opportunity to speak at the last public hearing would be allowed to speak.

III. Consent Agenda

The consent agenda consists of the following Resolutions: No.'s 08-1-1, 08-1-3 with addendum, 08-1-4, 08-1-5 with addendum, 08-1-6, 08-1-7, 08-1-8, 08-1-9 with addendum, 08-1-10 with addendum, 08-1-11, 08-1-12, 08-1-13, 08-1-14 with addendum, 08-1-15, and 08-1-17 with addendum.

SPONSORED BY MR. STYCOS

NO. 08-1-1- RESOLVED, that School Committee Policy No. 4213, Non-Certified Supervisory and Confidential Employees, as amended, be approved for first reading.

NO. 08-1-3 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following certified personnel be appointed for the remainder of the 2007-2008 school year:

David Sylvestre, salary to be at the third step plus MAT at the prevailing salary schedule

Education – Rhode Island College, BA; Providence College, MAT

Experience – Woonsocket High School

Certification – Secondary Mathematics

Assignment – Cranston High School West, Mathematics, .7 FTE

Effective Date of Employment: January 14, 2008

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 12611012 512100

This Resolution was withdrawn.

NO. 08-1-4 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following certified staff member be granted a leave of absence without compensation as provided in Article XIX, Section B3 of the Master Agreement between the Cranston School Committee and the Cranston Teachers' Alliance:

Deana Desjarlais, Teacher

Bain Middle School

Effective Dates: January 14, 2008 to September 2008

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NO. 08-1-5 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following certified personnel be appointed as

substitutes on a temporary basis as needed:

Kimberly Slinko Secondary History

Cheryl Palombo Elementary/Middle Special Education

Nisha Hunt Early Childhood, PK-2

Mary Keenan Elementary

Erik Sperl Music, K-12

Charles Kokolsky Guidance, K-12

Fatou Cissoko General Subject Matter, K-12

Sandra Cushman Secondary English

Justine Boisvert Physical Education, K-12

Leslie Trocchi Elementary/Middle Special Education

Nicholas Guadagno Physical Education, K-12

Jennifer Nygren Elementary

Evan Gilroy Secondary English

Melissa Mee Special Education, Elementary/Middle

Jo-Anne Gorman General Subject, K-12

NO. 08-1-6 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the retirement of the following certified personnel be accepted:

**Janet Salisbury, Teacher
Cranston High School West
Effective Date: December 21, 2007**

**Kathie Bouchard, Speech and Language Pathologist
Special Services
Effective Date: June 12, 2008**

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NO. 08-1-7 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignation of the following certified personnel be accepted:

**Amy Lockwood, Teacher
Cranston High School East**

Effective Date: January 3, 2008

NO. 08-1-8 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following individual be appointed as an athletic coach:

Christopher Tracy, Head Boys' Basketball, Park View Middle School

Step – 1

Class – D

Playing Competition – Cranston High School East

Experience – CYO Leagues

Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED/First Aid Certified

NO. 08-1-9 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following individuals be appointed as volunteer coaches:

Rusty Calise Cranston High School West Wrestling

Michael Penza Cranston High School East Wrestling

Sheila Lagasse Cranston High School West Indoor Girls' and Boys' Track

Courtney DeSousa Cranston High School East Cheerleading

NO. 08-1-10 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignation of the following coach be accepted:

Erin Miga, Head Boys' Volleyball Coach

Cranston High School East

Effective Date: January 7, 2008

James Raspallo, Assistant Girls' Soccer Coach

Cranston High School West

Effective Date: January 8, 2008

NO. 08-1-11 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, said non-certified personnel be recalled from layoff, and

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Be it further RESOLVED that the Superintendent notify those individuals of the Committee's actions.

NO. 08-1-12 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified employee be appointed:

Paula Roberti, Secretary

Alternate Education Program

Effective Date of Employment: January 22, 2008

Authorization: Replacement

Fiscal Note: 16278715 515100

NO. 08-1-13 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified personnel be appointed as substitutes on a temporary basis as needed:

TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Carol Grover

Sharon Picton

NO. 08-1-14 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignations of the following non-certified personnel be accepted:

John W. Kelly, Custodian

Plant

Effective Date: December 20, 2007

Cheryl Palombo, Teacher Assistant

Garden City School

Effective Date: December 27, 2007

Barbara Forloney, CNA Instructor

Alternate Education Program

Effective Date: December 18, 2007

Paul Hetu, Mathematics Instructor

Alternate Education Program

Effective Date: January 8, 2008

Siu Wah Chin, Three-Hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date: December 21, 2007

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No. 08-1-15 - RESOLVED, that the Cranston Public Schools submit the following grants:

Donors Choose

Say “Cheese” for Comprehension \$ 549.00

Horton School

Listening to Enhance Learning \$ 416.00

Horton School

One, Two, Three Type with Me \$ 325.00

Western Hills Middle School

Concentration Station \$ 361.00

Peters School

Tufts University

Children in Balance \$300,000.00

All Cranston Public Schools Grades 1-3

NO. 08-1-17 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following Field Trip of Long Duration be authorized:

Paula Titon, teacher at Cranston High School West, and twenty-four students to travel to Cambridge, Massachusetts from February 8, 2008 to February 10, 2008 to attend the BOSMUN (Boston Model UN VII.)

William Carcieri, residential construction teacher at the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center, to attend the OSHA Training Conference being held in Rhode Island.

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried that these Resolutions be adopted.

Mr. Scherza stated that he wished to acknowledge and honor two people who will be retiring from service at the end of the year. Kathie Bouchard is retiring in June after thirty years of service to Cranston Public Schools. Kathie has been a speech therapist in the district since 1978. Most recently she has been at the Early Childhood

Center. Janet Salisbury has spent thirty years, most of them as a business teacher at Cranston West. Everyone will miss them deeply. Both of them have given three decades each which is most of their adult lives to serve the children of Cranston, and it is very much appreciated.

Chairman Traficante commented that during the hearing this evening, he asked the public to state their name and address for the record. The public would be allowed

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three minutes to make their presentation. Ms. Iannazzi would time the public and indicate when three minutes are up. Order and decorum will be observed at all times, and everyone will agree to respect each other's opinion at all times when speaking.

IV. Public Acknowledgements / Communications

Chairman Traficante acknowledged Representative Arthur Handy who was in the audience.

V. Chairperson Communications

Chairman Traficante read the following statement: For the past week, I have had the opportunity to review the e-mails received from a variety of parents and teachers. Many were rather profound; I

sincerely thank you for your input, interest, and certainly your concerns. I also had the opportunity to revisit the two minority reports and a variety of creative flyers and mailers distributed by the Cranston Teachers' Union and its members. Based on all of the above, I believe that a reality check is warranted at this time and at this place. Please be assured, ladies and gentlemen, of two things. Mike Traficante does not have a hidden agenda, nor am I playing a smoke and mirror show game as one of the minority reports suggests and neither is any member of the Cranston School Committee or the administration. As an ex officio member of the Study Committee, I was at all times up front and forthcoming with the parents and the CTA members that served on that particular committee regarding my position. From the very outset, I informed each of them that the 6th grade concept was our attempt to deal with a dire economic and financial crisis that we are facing in the school department. A crisis, if not resolved, will it not only impact the 6th grade but will dismantle the entire education system that we come to know and appreciate. Therefore, let me attempt to clarify what this financial crisis is, what it is all about, and hopefully you will have a better understanding of what this committee is facing not only in the current year but ALSO next year as well.

For the current year, 2007-2008, as you know the School Committee adopted a budget of \$129 million. That included a \$1.1 million state aid appropriation. The Mayor proposed, as you all know, a budget of \$125 million creating an immediate gap of \$4 million. The City

Council adopted a school budget of \$126.3 million which created an immediate impact and gap of \$2.7 million. Included in the City Council budget was an appropriation of \$466,000 to purchase elementary textbooks based upon the sale of the Cranston police station. As you know, that has never materialized. Therefore, we have to absorb the \$466,000 creating a gap now of \$3.1 million. The state voted, as you all know, to reduce State Aid, so we lost an additional \$1.1 million. Therefore, our gap now stands at approximately \$4.2 million. We have requested relief from the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education. We were optimistic, however, that request was denied. Therefore, we will commence negotiations immediately with the Mayor of the City of Cranston and the City Council upon written notification in the immediate future.

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If we are not successful, the only option left to the School Committee is to consider Caruolo which, as you know, is court action. That court action is basically suing the Mayor and the City Council. In essence, we are suing the taxpayers of Cranston. In our negotiations or our court action, we are requesting not only a \$4 million increase in the bottom line of the school budget but a maintenance of effort of \$4 million. Let me explain exactly what that maintenance of effort is all about. By getting \$4 million does not help our situation for next year; it will help us in the current year; but we must have that \$4 million become part of the bottom line budget because our \$129 million budget that we requested which was reduced to \$126.3 million

we have to add \$4 million to that if we receive it which brings it to \$130 million. If we do not get the maintenance of effort situation from either negotiations or a court action, we are facing a \$4 million hole before we start the next budget year, 2008-2009. Now what are we facing in the following budgetary year? We already know; you read in the papers as well as I have that there will be no State Aid to Education, as far as we know at the present time. So, we will lose right there a revenue source of approximately \$1.1 million to \$1.3 million. By the way, the City of Cranston was just notified that the Governor cut \$1 million from municipal aid to the City of Cranston, known as pilot money payment in lieu of taxes. So, that doesn't help our situation either to get more revenue from the City. The Federal Government just notified us that they are going to cut our Medicaid for administrative services by \$300,000. For health care and dental care, health care went up 11%; dental is going up 7% which is going to cost us \$4.7 million. Certified pension mandated by the State of Rhode Island went up from 13.4% to 14.8% which cost us an additional \$1.6 million. For non-certified pension, the State increased it by 5.13% to 6.32% causing an increase in expenses there of \$150,000.

For projected step increases mandatory by contract is \$103 million. Teachers returning from leave is \$184,000. Fuel is up by \$70,000. Non-public transportation and textbooks are up by \$915,000. Utilities are \$3 million. Revenue downfall include vocational school tuitions are down, summer school tuitions are down, athletics is down,

miscellaneous revenue is down by \$650,000.

For projected salary increases, every 1% we negotiate is roughly \$800,000, and we haven't talked about FICA, textbooks, maintenance, and, of course, asset protection. Ladies and gentlemen, we are potentially looking at a proposed budget for 2008-2009 of approximately a 14% increase in city appropriation. That includes our successful negotiations and court action of \$4 million. I remind you again that if we do not receive that maintenance of effort of \$4 million, you can add \$4 million to our problem for next year. The 14% translates into a \$12 million increase in the city appropriation which is 9% over the statutory cap mandated by the State of Rhode Island of 5%. So, we have to look for a 9% reduction in our budget to meet that cap.

In the best case scenario, if all our bargaining units accept a salary freeze, we will still be facing a \$5 million to \$6 million problem over the 5% cap. So where do you look to find \$5 million to \$8 million over the cap? The answer is everywhere.

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The CTA flyer states that "small dollars, minimal savings." Ladies and gentlemen, the \$1.3 million savings by housing the 6th grade at the elementary school is critical to reducing that gap. The run-away train you illustrated in your flyer left the station three years ago when I presented the school budget to the City Council, and for the past

three years, we have had to eliminate thirty plus teaching jobs, a number of custodians, secretaries, administrators, and guidance counselors. We have had to consolidate and compact a number of elementary school and secondary school classes just to name a few. My question to each of you in the audience tonight is where were you when we were battling with the City Council. The Superintendent and I, as well as a number of School Committee members, went on the road to speak to every single PTO we could possibly speak to prior to the budget process. We request their help to be there when we battled with the City Council. Where were they? We do not know. Maybe if we had the same kind of support I see here tonight, maybe this meeting would not be absolutely necessary. Ladies and gentlemen, we are not trying to railroad your children; we are not trying to create a train wreck as the CTA flyer suggests. We are, as a school system and a School Committee, attempting to survive and maintain; and I certainly don't need one of our teachers waving the ProJo in my face stating that the Mayor met his obligation to the Pontiac Avenue taxpayers by negotiating a \$1.9 million settlement for the concrete plant. I would have hoped that that teacher would have waved the ProJo at me and stated as an educator that the \$1.9 million would have been better served in support of the school budget and the kids that we service.

To the Cranston Teachers' Union, my sincerest congratulations on your campaign to rally the troops. Unfortunately, you are three budgets too late. But, I say this with all sincerity as a union leader

myself, I can appreciate your concern and your attempt to avoid job loss in your bargaining unit; that is your job. I certainly appreciate what your job is. I hope all of you now can appreciate where I am coming from and where the School Committee is coming from and why. You may not share our opinion and dilemma, but at least you know that we do not have a hidden agenda nor do we play shell games with people's livelihood or children's education.

I sat in the Mayor's office for fourteen years, ladies and gentlemen, and had to produce fourteen municipal budgets to include the school budget. In my fourteen years at the helm, I have never seen such a sad, catastrophic, financial crisis facing our educational community and students. The State and the Feds have dumped their fiduciary educational responsibilities on the backs of the local taxpayers. They have created a perfect educational storm, but unfortunately public education children will pay the price. Thank you for listening.

VI. Superintendent Communications

Assistant Superintendent Peter Nero stated that he prepared some remarks based on some comments that were made at the last meeting, and he apologized for not

consulting with the Chair that some of his remarks may be redundant. This is something that needs to be read into the record. First of all, quick comments regarding the committee. Whether you are on the majority or on the minority side of the issue, I found members to be passionate regarding their concerns for this issue. I personally believe that we need to look at long-term capital needs for our middle schools which are in dire need of repair. We have remodeled and renovated both of our high schools and built two new elementary schools in the last fifteen years yet we have not done anything of substance to our middle schools in the last thirty-five years. The heart of any school is its library media center and its science class rooms. At Park View, those situations are fifty-two years old; at Western Hills they are thirty-eight years old; and at Bain they are eighty years old. We are preparing our kids for high school, college, and most importantly for a technologically sophisticated world in middle schools, quite frankly, that are worn and torn.

My personal feeling continues to be that instead of spending \$4.5 million on an addition to one school, let's take that money and remodel all three middle schools. As far as the comments that this committee was in a rush, it was stated from the very first meeting on September 10th that due to the fact that the district had statutory requirements to present the 2008-2009 budget in January, a decision would have to be made by December or January. In fact, the presentation of 2008-2009 budget will be January 30th with the work

shops following in February. At the beginning of our committee meetings, members were given suggested readings including “A Nation at Risk”, “Turning Points”, “Turning Points 2000”, and “A Place Called School.” Incidentally, they were some of the same readings that we all read which were required when we first started to investigate middle school some fourteen years ago.

Regarding where 6th graders belong either in the middle schools or in the elementary schools, the research is sometimes ambiguous. Some research supports middle school models while others support K to 6 and even K to 8. What it doesn't support is a junior high school model which is not our intention. Middle schools can be configured in grades 6 through 8, 5 through 8, and 7 and 8 middle school. When Cranston moved to its present middle school model in 1995, it was based partly on the population at the junior highs and high schools which were beginning to turn the corner and increase after nearly fifteen years of continuous declining enrollment. Our two high schools grades 10 through 12 at that time had 800 to 900 students attending. Our junior high schools grades 7 through 9 had between 400 and 650 students, significantly less than they are presently with our three grades. Our high schools have present populations of 1,600 and 1,700 students. Moving to the middle school configuration, 6 through 8 and 9th grades to the high schools, made perfect sense when it was the right move back in 1995. So, when asked where is the research that the 6th graders are better served in the elementary schools, I can also offer to you our authentic research

in Cranston which is that in forty to fifty years of modern day education when in fact we did house our 6th

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graders at the elementary schools with a great deal of success, we also find that our K to 5 students already finding success.

Regarding the comment that Warwick wants to convert to a 6-8 middle school model, yes, it is a fact that Warwick wants to convert to middle schools. This is something they wanted to do for almost ten years. The fact is that Warwick officials met with me while I was principal of Western Hills in the year 2000 as did East Greenwich in the year 2001 to look at our middle school model. The fact is that Warwick is facing the same economic issues that we face and moving to the middle school model is very expensive. Please remember that Warwick has had junior highs with a grades 7 and 8 configuration. Again, we are not abandoning the middle school model. We are presently facing a \$3.8 million deficit in the current budget. A recent ProJo article described the possibility of Warwick having a \$600,000 short fall in the present budget, and they have to find \$9 million to \$12 million in the next two to three years on additional contractual obligations. Again, they have been trying to transition the middle school over the last nine years, and I am wondering how successful they will be in doing so based on our bleak statewide economic condition. You have read in the paper that

we are presently facing a \$3.8 million deficit. For the first time in the City's history last year, we were level funded by the Mayor and the City Council. I give credit as well, and I hope it was Ken and Liz because I know that they are very creative, to the CTA regarding the theme of the runaway train because it was truly ingenious. I will disagree with Mr. Traficante, however, that train did not start its journey in September with this committee. I believe that train left the station one night in the spring of 2004. The station it left from was Cranston High School East. On that night, Acting Superintendent of Schools Jim Cofone stood in front of the City Council and gave them the bottom line number necessary to run the district for the 2004-2005 school year. He then told the Council as they looked out at an audience of thirty to fifty people in an auditorium that holds 700, that unless we received the bottom line amount, and I quote "that we would be looking at the beginning of the dismantling of the Cranston Public School System." That night I wondered what the Council was thinking at how compelling Mr. Cofone's comments were when there were only thirty to fifty people in attendance and most of them were administrators. That train started to pick up steam in the years 2005, 2006, and 2007. Again, the Council looked out and saw thirty to fifty people in attendance when they were in charge of appropriating the allocation to the school department. It makes me wonder again where were we when that train was passing by and picking up steam.

Over the last three years, we have condensed and consolidated

teaching positions. We have already lost thirty positions, thirty young, innovative teachers, eliminated custodians, secretaries, building aides, and central administrators. Again, the train continues to pick up speed. The Department of Education, as a result of No Child Left Behind, has placed mandates on us at a considerable cost to the district. Some are realistic; some are not. One of the requirements of the PBGR's, is the Digital Portfolio which was mandated four years ago. The first student to walk across the stage at

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PPAC for graduation under the Digital Portfolio will happen in June. We estimate that we have spent prior to this year at least \$600,000 on the Digital Portfolio System. That is the equivalent of twenty teachers' salaries, and again the train keeps chugging along. Teachers in two school districts are getting hit from every direction. We hardly have any friends at the Legislature. Last year they level funded state aid to education on top of the fact that the district was also level funded from the City. I hear that we will not be level funded this year. Even worse, I heard that they will be cutting state aid to education coming up in the next year. Matthew, I heard you passionately read the contract promise last week. It is the same promise that was in the contract when I came to Cranston to be a teacher in 1978, yet from 1978 to 1986 in an eight-year period, he was involuntarily transferred four times to five secondary schools and

received the layoff notice as well every year; but that was different then. In the 70's and 80's it was because of the declining enrollment, and it wasn't because of the lack of funding or people caring somewhere in government about not funding schools. When you brought up the \$1.9 million cost settlement on the concrete plant that it was the right thing to do, in all honesty I thought if that money went to the school district that would be a pretty okay thing as well. It would cut our deficit in half. Instead of a \$3.8 million deficit, it would have been \$1.9 million, and we would have a little better shot with our maintenance of effort as we go into this budget. I am not sure where it is all going to end. This is thirty-two years for me. I have never seen it that bad; it is not going to end tonight. The pension reform which was passed three years ago has not served to help districts save any money. It only served to throw young teachers under the bus or on to the train tracks. What I am hearing coming out of the Legislature for this year is down right scary. I am confused; they pass pension reform, and we could face a potential increase in our contribution as Mr. Traficante just said of \$1.6 million. This, undoubtedly, will mean that further cuts to our educational services. It bothers me personally, and this is a personal thing, that the Governor who spent thirty minutes in the classroom as a teacher almost fifty years ago and professes to be an expert in our field. While he continues to look to educational reform, he never asks us, the teachers and the administrators—the professionals, what we need to be successful. If he did, we would answer.

Regarding heterogeneity, the middle school committee has one more charge left which is to examine the possibility of heterogeneously grouping our students at the middle school level. Unless we are willing to take some bold steps, I say without sarcasm for the risk of being flip, we will only be wasting our time. You see, we will as a community have to make the decision for those in our community who are not making the decision for themselves. Just as we discussed heterogeneity last spring at the School Committee meeting or anything that we discussed in the last couple of weeks, we are intending to help our minority males in this district because they are under-represented in our upper level classrooms; and they are clearly under-represented in all our meetings as well.

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One final comment, again, I mean this and I say this in the absence of any sarcasm, whether this resolution passes or fails tonight, the next train leaving the station departs on January 30th from Western Hills Middle School. The final destination will be the City Council on or about May 15th by City Charter. Please check for final arrivals. I call upon the CTA, of which I was a member for twenty years, to help us by sending out the same glossy pamphlet to all those houses in Cranston announcing when the City Council will adopt the school department budget. So, instead of the Council looking out at an

audience of thirty to fifty people, all of you present here tonight will be there to support our budget so that in the future years you will not see the continuing dismantling of the Cranston Public School System. I thank you for this opportunity.

VII. School Committee Member Communications

There were none.

VIII. Public Hearing

a. Students (Agenda/Non-agenda Items)

b. Members of the Public (Agenda Matters Only)

Barbara Hill, 19 Bradford Road and Laura Larock, 586 Park Avenue, Park View Middle School Students – They stated that they could remember on their first day they were really nervous. They were afraid they were going to get lost, and they didn't know where they were going to go. Now that they have been there for a while and it is almost the third quarter, they have learned to like it. The teachers are very thoughtful, and if it is moved back, all of that will be gone. It is really helpful to have different teachers for each subject. It makes it easier to learn that way. They have asked some of their friends who have younger siblings that are in 5th grade what they would think, and they all said they would not like the 6th grade moved back because they told their siblings about how great Park View is. One of the students has been taking strings since 3rd grade, and this is one

of the things that will be cut if the 6th graders move back.

Emma St. Jean, 87 Massasoit Avenue – She read the following statement: I know that moving 6th grade is supposed to save money, but how? You're taking from the middle schools and piling it all on the elementary schools. I know that it's a little tight on the western side, but it's fine on the eastern side. Barely. The elementary schools don't have room for 6th grade. At Rhodes we would lose our art and music room and our EPIC room. I know that you've looked at the whole matter financially, but what about from a kid's point of view? We're mature enough, and we want to take the next step. We've been preparing and maturing since kindergarten. I think we're ready. Think of it this way; it's the last day of 5th grade and you're anxious for change. You want better lockers, better lunches, and to meet new kids and take new classes. You're so excited you almost want to skip summer and have school the next day. Then you find out that

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you still have a whole year to go. 6th grade has been moved back to the elementary schools. It feels awful, doesn't it? Waiting a whole year for what you had your heart set on. It hurts. This is what my view is of another year at elementary. Then again, I'm just a kid. What does my opinion matter? Well, let me tell you this. Kids might not be able to drive cars; we might not be able to vote; and we might

spend all of our money on candy, but it doesn't mean we don't have an opinion. My name is Emma St. Jean; I'm ten years old, and this is my education, and this is why I think the 6th grade should remain in middle school. Thank you.

Amanda Way, 317 Beckwith Street, and Becky Davis, 119 Betsey Williams Drive, Park View Middle School Students – They stated that they really like it there and are in 7th grade. They really loved 6th grade last year. They believe that it should stay because without the 6th grade there it is like being in 7th grade and the next year they are leaving. There is no time to have school spirit and get to know all the teachers and

to have a learning experience there. They were nervous going into 6th grade like any other kid, but while in 6th grade they were very happy. The teachers would slowly put everything hard on them so that they could make the process to be more mature and to be able to handle things and have more responsibility. One of them didn't like being at the bottom of the food chain in middle school. Once moved up to the next grade, everything was able to click. Because of that 6th grade experience, kids are able to get along so well. They make more friends and get into more social groups. It is just not financial problems. If they move 6th grade back, it will be a problem for everyone, and most people will probably not like it. Besides the in-school activities, some things that might be cut at the 6th grade are after-school activities such as cooking, sewing, etc. One of them is in Student Council and it has contributed to who she is and other things

she does after school contributes such as Science Olympiad which probably will be cut next year because the group will be so small. She has learned so much from that. When she moves on to high school, she will use it in high school. She enjoys the band program even though she started in 6th grade. If it gets cut, not only will the middle school be effected but also the high school marching bands will be effected too because the kids there won't have as much experience.

Martha Andrade, 88 Columbia Avenue and Emma Stanton, 108 Betsey Williams Drive – They read the following statement: Please don't move the 6th grade back to the elementary schools. Here are some reasons why. People say that elementary teachers cover all four core subjects every day, but this isn't true. In my 5th grade year, we covered about two units in science. In 6th grade, I started having science every day and covered five times that material. The same can be said for social studies. Also, my major subjects in 6th grade were harder because we were grouped by ability. I learned more in those groups. I'm also worried about my little brother who will start elementary school next year. I don't want him to be bullied or teased by 6th graders. I know how 6th graders act, and they usually are not a positive influence on younger children. I am a 7th grade strings orchestra member, and in the 5th grade when I would miss class to get

instrumental instruction, there were maybe six or seven people in strings orchestra, and it was pretty boring. This year, I have the opportunity to play in a real orchestra with sixty people and more challenging pieces. Also, if the 6th grade is moved, 6th graders won't be able to participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities available in middle school such as Drama Club, NEED, Science Olympiad, and the Robotics Club. Emma was one of the Park View representatives at the NEED Youth Awards Convention in Washington, DC in her 6th grade year. These activities make school a better experience for many children. In conclusion, we urge you to keep the 6th grade in the middle schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kathryn McDaniel, 56 Circuit Drive – She read the following statement: I am an 8th grade student at Park View. When I heard that the 6th grade was being moved back to elementary school, I found myself confused. I could not comprehend a reason why this would be beneficial to the students graduating from 5th grade. 6th grade was a major transition year from elementary school to middle school; going from twenty minutes of homework to more than an hour. My elementary school was very beneficial when it came to English but weak when it pertained to math. I came to Park View, and I could barely remember my times tables; I got the specific training and help I needed in all my major subjects. My math teacher not only got me to memorize my times table, she taught me fractions

and other functions that prepared me for pre-algebra. If I had only one teacher that taught me all four subjects; she would have never been able to stay to one subject long enough for me to fully understand it. Teachers in 7th grade put what you have learned from your past grades into use. Sixth grade is a major check-up year to make sure that you fully understand all the concepts that you have been introduced to. In this case, the sixth grade in elementary school would leave you with one period less to learn and with only one teacher to depend upon for all this range of expertise. Upon hearing this news, I went down to visit my 6th grade teachers and I wasn't surprised by their glum mood. What did surprise me was the fact their sadness had absolutely nothing to do with the possible transfer of their jobs to elementary school. They were not thinking of themselves. Their irritation and their pain was for the future sixth grade students. Their educational experiences practically sacrificed to save Cranston money. Money. I would think that a student's education, coming from teachers skilled in that subject is worth more than a dollar amount.

Noah Smith, 6th Grade Student at Park View Middle School – He stated that from what he has heard the reason why the 6th grade may be moved to elementary school is because the budget is small and they need to save money; but the amount of money they will be saving isn't that big a percentage of the total money. He really likes 6th grade. In elementary school, a lot of the subjects were too easy, and they kept going over the same things over and over again. They

weren't challenged enough and pushed to learn as fast as they could.

They learn a lot more in 6th grade and have teachers for each subject. That also makes it easier to learn. The unified arts in middle school are much better. In the elementary school, they didn't do that much and weren't

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taught how to do them well; they were just given assignments and had to do them and not taught how to do them. In 5th grade the students stay in one classroom most of the day except for lunch and recess. In 6th grade, it is nice because they get to move around and don't have to stay cramped at one desk all day. In 6th grade, he likes the after-school programs of which there weren't many of in elementary school.

Droody Pierre, 104 Eldridge Street – She read the following statement: I am an 8th grader and attend Park View Middle School. Although this is my first year at Park View, I know how it feels to attend 6th grade in elementary school. When I was nine years old and finishing 5th grade, I felt proud of myself knowing that I would no longer be known as the little girl in elementary but that maturing young adult moving on to middle school. Ever since 1st grade, I waited for the day that I would walk and receive that certificate to move on and go on experiencing middle school. I did graduate but over the summer I moved I thought that even though I moved I would

still be going to 6th grade in middle school, but I didn't. I learned that in the state that I moved to 6th grade was still considered elementary and that crushed me. Imagine yourself preparing for something for so long, years even, and when it was finally there it's being crushed. That year I spent my whole 6th grade with one teacher, and recess, yes recess. Did you ever have

recess in 6th grade? I thought 6th grade was the time to prepare for the road ahead. I then again went on to graduating and yet again preparing myself for middle school. To me 7th and 8th grade are the two most important grades there is in middle school because 7th grade is a step up from 6th and in 7th grade most teachers expect you to already know what to do and get right on it. 6th grade is a time in a child's life where they are suppose to begin going through the transition of being around many people inside and out of school and experiencing how it would feel like going to school in a high school. For me since I wasn't really use to the transition it took me almost two months to get use to the fact that there were more students and the fact that I had more teachers. It took away most of my time, time that wouldn't have been wasted if I had 6th grade in middle school and adapted to the transition. Moving the 6th graders down to the elementary school won't only take up time but also put so many teachers without jobs. It is already hard for someone to find a job in the U.S.A. or anywhere. It's like saying to one out of possibly fifty teachers that they don't have to worry, this move won't really effect them as much; but what about the other forty-nine teachers. How do you think it would effect them? Not only them but their loved

ones. Think about the kids that would lose time. Think about the teachers that could become unemployed. Think about the family and the ones they love. That's why I oppose the 6th graders moving to the elementary school. Think about it.

Toyosi Akanji, 268 Smith Street, and Anita Hammond, 2020 Broad Street – They read the following: I need to ask you something. Is school about money or is it really about educational purposes? My friends and I have always felt that 6th grade would be the best thing ever. We just go to middle school and just have fun and learn a lot more than we did just listening to our teacher talk all day. You are thinking that we are just

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kids, but we do have an opinion. Just because we are kids and younger than adults, we have a voice. I am Anita and I am in elementary school. Next year I am going to 6th grade. We want to speak up and say what we want to say. Me and most of my class want 6th grade to stay in middle school. Also, most of the teachers also want 6th grade to stay in middle school. I know we are just kids, but you should listen to us and give us a chance to speak up and say what we want to say. Here is what I want to say. First, if 6th grade comes to elementary school, there won't be room and teachers may lose their jobs. Second, we are ready for a middle school education and we should go to three years of middle school not two years. And

last, we are more mature in 6th grade and we should be in middle school with other mature kids. Just remember those who want 6th grade in middle school not elementary school. We can fight together to overrule this vote of putting 6th grade in elementary school. Chances are that I will have a teacher that has only one strong subject. She will probably be good at only math or science. They will be weak in other subjects, and we won't get as much as we really need. Fight the power.

Ivy Swinski, 6th Grade Student, Bain Middle School, 30 Sumner Avenue – She read the following statement: Sixth graders belong in middle school. We are ready to have different teachers for classes. We have a chance to learn new things like world languages, cooking, sewing, and computer technology. Middle school lets us be in classes where we can learn at our own pace. Some students learn faster and others slower. There are so many teachers who help us do better. We do not need to rely on one teacher all day. Each teacher helps us with different styles of learning information. Middle school lets us participate in so many activities not available in elementary school. Programs like middle school sports, student council, band and Bain +2 give us a chance to go out into the community at a more advanced level for both our age and ability. All the kids in band would be very sad because they wouldn't be able to learn together and might have to learn with the older grades. This was devastating to most of them. Moving sixth grade back to elementary school is not the best for kids, just the budget. This is unfair to us. It's like putting

a band-aid on a hole in a leaking dam. The band-aid might hold for a little bit but in the long run the band-aid will fall off. One of her favorite teachers might be cut from their classes and she might be bumped. Please keep 6th graders in the middle school. It is the right thing to do for our education.

Eric Halvarson, 229 Orchard Street – He read the following statement:

I am a 5th grade student and the student council president at Eden Park, and I am here today representing my fifth grade class and my fellow band students. We believe strongly that the sixth grade belongs at the middle school. Here are our reasons: We believe that our education needs to be well rounded to help us to develop into well rounded adults. We need to be in a classroom next year with the best teacher to help us to continue to achieve the best education possible. As a member of the band, I am looking forward to continuing my musical development with the band at Park View with Mr. Hassan. I understand that the proposal being considered will severely affect this – effectively

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putting my music education on hold until high school. I understand the jazz band would be eliminated. This is a shame. I have also been told that many families send their children to Cranston schools rather than private due to the music and arts programs. If these programs are effectively slashed and destroyed, then my family would consider

private school and I would need to leave my friends. Please do not allow this to happen. Thank you for listening to me.

Kaileen Field, 55 Marion Avenue, 6th Grade Student at Park View –
She read the following statement: Moving sixth grade back will not only affect fifth grade but all of the middle schools. We will be losing band, strings, chorus, life skills, and many more. It will not give a chance to the fifth grade children to be a middle school kid. They will have to wait another year to do all these fun activities. Another reason this is a bad idea is because all of these wonderful teachers will lose their jobs. Next is that there is no room to fit the sixth grade class. They will not be able to move from class to class. This will really change a lot of people as people if this happens. This will impact the whole city of Cranston negatively in every which way. This decision needs to be thought out carefully. Please do not move the sixth grade back.

Elizabeth Hampson, 16 Edgewood Avenue, 6th Grade Student at Park View – She read the following statement: In the four or five months I have been at Park View, I have grown to love my school. My core teachers are great, and the subjects are interesting. That, however, is not what I was looking for when I came to Park View. I

had heard from my brothers about unified arts, and I was excited that I would do those things too. I was not disappointed. Art gives me a lot more than it did in elementary school. To tell the truth, after six years of coloring with crayons, you get a little excited about real art.

My violin class plays better music than last year. Music and art are two of the first forms of communication. Without them, our nation, no, world, and our lives would be drastically changed for the worst. If the 6th grade goes back into elementary school, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders would be damaged. Everything that enables kids to think outside the box will be gone. On an ending note, I don't really see the problem with kids learning in bus bays. I did not even know we were in them until you brought it up for this situation, and I really didn't care when I found out. So, I ask you, why are the adults worrying about something the kids don't even know, let alone care about. I don't care about being taught in a different type of classroom. Once a bus bay is converted into a classroom, is it a bus bay any longer? No. It is a classroom. Unified Arts mean a lot to many of us. Great teachers teach us many great things. Please think about our education. We, the kids and parents are the ones who are most affected. We should have a say. If you decide to go along with this plan, I will be upset, but I will be proud to put my voice with the ones saying "No."

Cathryn Nota, 105 Westcott Avenue - She stated that she was here as an involved and concerned parent of a Kindergartner and 1st grader at Stadium School and a 6th grader at Bain. The Chairman asked where she was. She was the treasurer for two

years at Stadium; she was the president for the past two years, and her daughter just entered Kindergarten. She was taking care of her family; that is where she was. She does not think that it is good judgment on the committee's part to put the 6th grade back in elementary school. One may not think that the 6th graders are that big compared to an 8th grade but match them up to a tiny little Kindergartner, and it is like putting a 6th grader with a senior in high school. Besides the size difference, there is also the age difference. To top it all off, they don't think that 6th graders are capable of being in the middle school level, but they plan to bus children who are practically babies around the city for Kindergarten. How a five year old is mature enough to be bused around the city to go to one school for Kindergarten and another for 1st grade but a 12 year old is not mature enough is beyond her. Another prudent reason not to put 6th grade back in elementary school is because they will lose the special education classes available in some of the schools. But in the committee's line of thinking these children with special needs are also better able to cope with being moved around and are better able to cope with being in large classrooms rather than in a small classroom than the 12 year olds are. She vehemently disagrees with any decision to change the grade level of our schools. If this is what it comes to, though, at the very least it should be the 6th graders who are moved around to the empty classrooms and not the first time in school baby Kindergarteners. Seeing as Western Hills is the only school with the real problem, she asked why their 6th grade for a couple of years couldn't go to Orchard Farms School and Hope

Highlands School until the new building is completed instead of the upheaval of the staff and students and parents so that it doesn't happen. She asked how music and art are taken away from these children. Her son was first chair violin for the 6th grade concert at Bain last week, and now the committee is saying that other children will not get this opportunity. She asked how they foster school spirit in two years also. Out of all the children she has spoken to, and apparently a lot of them have spoken tonight, their feelings on this matter is that they want to stay in the middle school level. She now believes that there aren't any more important matters that they couldn't have worked on with the time they have wasted on this matter.

Greg Levin, 2 Sage Drive – He stated that he has watched this issue from its infancy and listened to both sides and all the speakers at the last meeting. He feels for a good reason a short background is in order. He was born and raised in Cranston, attended Glen Hills School, Western Hills and Cranston West. As a member of the Falcon band and serving as West Class President graduating in 1985, he obtained his doctorate in Boston in 1992. He is the product of public schools in this city and believes especially in Cranston because this is where he built his home thirteen years ago. He gave this background because social relationships and the love of music were born for him in this Cranston Public Schools system. His leadership qualities were honed in Cranston, and the education itself afforded him to attend college and graduate school. He wants the same

opportunities in education, music, and leadership for his children. The Cranston School System use to go forward with new innovative plans to enhance its value, not backward lessening the arts and music, decreasing exposure to core subjects. Without

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any further training deemed desirable by the Superintendent having current middle school teachers who have taught one subject for years now are being asked to teach subjects to the children they are not holding. He has never spoken publicly on any issue in Cranston even though he occasionally finds fault. He was speaking today because his most important job, the one he cares about most, is being dad to Austin and Jake. He is their advocate, and the committee is supposed to be his and everyone's. He was here to directly state for Austin and Jake and for others who could not speak tonight. "Don't mess with my children's education." He chose Cranston because he lived this educational system, appreciated its reputation, and liked the dedication of the teachers and administration and insists that it remain in tact. The bottom line is that the committee has a space issue at the middle school level and thereby a money issue. If he were to list the ways to fix the space and money issues, moving the 6th grade backwards to save still undefined money at a potential expense of the students would be near the bottom. Not one person has stated the move on educational merits. If there is a space issue, add space. If this is a money issue,

find ways to increase funding through a city which seems to have enough money for multimillion dollar concrete plants or, more importantly, like the rest of the people here, decrease spending. Prioritize the cuts with drastic changes in curriculum or educational value coming last, not first. No one has shown alternative means to save a like amount of money in this budget, just different alternatives to the same flawed plan. Members of this committee still have more questions than answers yet some voted at the sub-committee level and continued to ask questions at these meetings – a rush to judgment. It is somewhat disheartening this evening because according to a Providence Journal article this week three members of this committee, including its Chairman, have already committed their vote without listening to this public comment.

Felicia Germani, 45 Freehold Avenue – She read the following statement: I am speaking on behalf of the reduction of art instruction in the middle school level. As a Cranston alumnus, I have had the privilege of experiencing the visual arts program from Kindergarten through senior year. I graduated from Cranston West in 2001 and graduated from Rhode Island School of Design in 2005 with a Bachelors in graphic design. Today I work at GTECH, an international company located here in Rhode Island, as a graphic designer and game developer. I've been with this company for a year and a half, and I've built the reputation among my colleagues as someone with a creative, innovative mind and a strong work ethic. Ladies and gentlemen, I recently learned that there has been some discussion of

eliminating the full art program in the middle school level, and I'm here as a life-long resident of Cranston who has gone through the Cranston School System and sequential art program to convince you to believe that this is just not acceptable, and just down right ridiculous. I don't think many of you understand that at the middle school years, you are building the ultimate foundation of the essential skills one would need in order to not just go through but excel in the future classes in high school. For me, art at the middle school level allowed me to develop my skills as an artist, and it was during that time that I actually

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acknowledged that I had a great talent. I knew then that visual art was ultimately going to be a part of my life, and if I didn't have the resources that the Cranston School System provided for me during that time, I don't think I could not only survive the competitive, cut-throat, and intense program I experienced during my time at RISD, but also I don't think I'd even have a chance of getting in! I did get in, and so did two others from my graduating class. During my time at RISD, there was always an alumni from Cranston enrolled. Cranston represents a large portion of the 1% of Rhode Island residents allowed in each freshman class. Using the skills I learned in the middle school level, not only technical skills but also how to be disciplined, competitive, hard working, productive, and most importantly time management. These are lessons and skills that

everyone needs in order to be successful, not just artists, designers, and other creative arts such as music. It is important to develop these skills at an early age especially in the middle school years when kids are reaching a point in their lives when they become extremely aware of the person they want to be and the person they want to become. Why deny them this field of study? I have seen so many of my peers succeed. I have had classmates who are currently working for NASA right, designing for Apple computers, and they are established architects and musicians and engineers. I urge you to examine the reduction of the art instruction proposals. Your decision will not only affect the middle school years but also will ultimately affect the high school program as well. Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you tonight.

Pam Schiff, 68 Mauran Street – She read the following statement: I am a parent. I am a taxpayer. I am saddened and disillusioned. I am scared that the democratic fundamentals of our elected officials listening to and following the wants and needs of their constituents are being blatantly ignored. The subcommittee met a total of twelve times. There were members who did not attend every meeting. Some missed several. If the meetings were three hours long, which is quite an exaggeration, that means a decision is being based on thirty-six hours of meetings. It takes people longer than that amount of time to buy a car, plan a vacation, or make any major life decisions, that only affects their immediate families directly. How can the School Committee possibly justify that after a mere thirty-six

hours there is sufficient and strong enough information to warrant this drastic decision? Families move to Cranston because of our stellar school department. Teachers want to work here because they know (or used to know) that we offer a system that nurtures and welcomes the innovative, enthusiastic and involved teacher. Now, it appears that politics and money are more influential than giving our children quality education, and teacher retention. The most devastating and truly disillusioning part of this whole issue is that it never was about the children, or what is in their best educational interests. It is about money -- bottom line. Can we truly put a price on any child's education? You are supposed to be the advocates of the educational process for our children. We entrusted that charge to you when we voted for you. How many of you have gone out to your wards and spoken directly with your constituents about this matter? Are you listening to what the citizens of Cranston want? All of you needed to do your due diligence on this matter, whether you are on the

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subcommittee or not. All of you are sitting here tonight because we, the citizens of Cranston, felt you would represent us, our families, and our children to the best of your abilities, having their best interests and educational concerns in the forefront of all your decision making. We are begging you this evening not to let politics run your decision. If I am not mistaken, not one of you has a child

enrolled currently in the Cranston Public School system. This decision has no direct bearing on your families or your livelihoods. We teach our children from day one to stand up for their beliefs. If they see an injustice to speak up and try to do the right thing which they did so beautifully this evening. Tell me how can you explain to them that the people we entrusted to do the right thing have let them down?

Lori-Jo Creta, 123 Gladstone Street – She stated that she has two children, one is at Bain and one is at Gladstone Street School. They are both high honor students. She wants the committee to keep two words in their minds while she says her few words-astro turf and open spaces. She asked Mr. Traficante where she was when he met with the legislators? She was raising funds to pay for planners, chairs, and risers for her school. The survey that was sent out to the parents was not filled out without the answers needed to make an educated decision. She understood the feeling of a child going into 6th grade middle school. It is the same feeling one would have sending a child to Kindergarten or to college. Gladstone presently has 525 students. They have a terrible traffic problem and overcrowded lunchrooms. If the 6th grade stays, there will be over 600 students. Her son presently eats lunch at 1:15 in the afternoon. She asked if he will have to stay after school to fit his lunch in. Take the time and find the money. It is about the kids. Talk to the Mayor about the astro turf he just purchased for the Stadium. Talk to the Mayor about the \$1.9 million he spent on open spaces where the

cement plant was supposed to be. That is \$2 million that could have gone to the students.

Jane Johnson Wall, 4 Grove Avenue – She stated that she did not envy the position that any of the committee are in. She indicated to Mr. Stycos that they have e-mailed

back and forth extensively and thanked him for acknowledging her and taking the time to give some credibility to where she was at as a parent. To Mr. Nero she said that she had spoken with him yesterday and also when he was principal at Western Hills. The bottom line is she has a personal story that is as complex as anyone here. It is very refreshing for her as a parent and as a paraprofessional who works at various public school systems to hear those students get up and speak. That is why she lives in Cranston. She is at Waterman School as a new mom. Her daughter has started Kindergarten. She has a Kindergartener starting in September. She asked how she should say to her daughter that she won't be going to Waterman with her sister and will be getting on a bus. This is a big money issue. It has to be fixed somewhere. Four years ago she was recovering from back to back babies, so shame on her for not getting involved earlier, and she does take ownership for that. Her husband is an educator and works in the city of Providence. She should have been more aware and

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will be more aware now. She understands that this fiscal crisis is

something beyond being solved by a really big bake sale. In all seriousness, she asked if they could have another year, and the answer is yes. She asked if they could have an opportunity to make some sacrifices on this level to see what can be done at each individual school to pull together some funds. They won't be able to solve it, but asked if they could have an opportunity to move forward and take a stand. She knows that in the end they will be getting further in debt. The students have shown that they have a level of commitment to this. They are well spoken. Families have shown they have a level of commitment. In all fairness, everyone deserves an opportunity to follow through.

Constantine Grammis, 81 Raven Circle - He stated that in 2000 he was notified by the School Committee that his daughters were not able to attend the school they were supposed to go to because of overcrowding, and they were redistricted to Stone Hill School. At that time, they were very concerned; and they were concerned because they weren't going to the school they were supposed to be going to. In the end, everything the School Committee said was correct. His children were resilient and they would succeed. They did succeed because they had small classrooms. Subsequent to that, he lobbied the School Committee later on for the building of Orchard Farms School, and he asked then and he also asked the City Council at that same time what they were doing about the systemic growth problem in the western side of the city because they were going to have a problem in a few years when all of these children got to the middle

school. They sat there dumbfounded; they had no response, and that is very scary. He has been following this problem for a number of years. He has two daughters in the middle school now, and he has two daughters in the fifth grade. They are moving hopefully to the middle school next year. If they don't, they will stay in the elementary school. Orchard Farms where they attend probably can sustain that additional two classrooms; other elementary schools cannot. The fact is that for all those other students whose parents are not here today, those non 6th grade parents, will be impacted. His nephews and nieces and friends of theirs because those Kindergarteners and first graders and those students who need the additional help care and guidance won't have that. They will have classrooms that are twenty-five, thirty or larger because they lost potentially two classrooms in each of the schools. He is not concerned about his fifth

grader daughters; they will be fine if they have to do one more year in the elementary school, but it is his nieces and nephews and people not here tonight who don't realize that they are really impacted by this. The survey that was sent out was geared to a small subset of the population. He asked Mr. Traficante when he came to visit his school about the fact of redistricting creating a magnet school. Mr. Traficante told him that it was a problem that they don't want to look at because it is too big. He would submit again that it should be on the table before they suddenly say to move all the children back to save money. In a few years the state is going to mandate all-day Kindergarten. When that happens, he asked if all the children would

suddenly be moved back to the 6th grade. The committee is looking at a band-aid for a long-term

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problem. They need to have a long-term vision. That is how lives are managed and that is how the entire city should be managed and the school department.

Jayne Edwards, 43 Briarcliffe Road – She read the following statement: I have two sons in Park View and a son and daughter at Waterman. It has always been my understanding that the School Committee looked out for the education of the children of Cranston. This is why you have all chosen to be on the School Committee. But I have to ask, where is the education in this proposal? There is not any educational gain, only a loss, as we are being told this is being done for financial reasons. It is a band-aid. You may be downsizing the middle schools and removing the portables only to overcrowd the elementary schools. And not all students will be able to attend or finish their assigned school. The Planning Board projects an increase in the elementary schools in five years. What will you do then, move everyone back to the middle school? This is not how we want our children educated. There are many questions that remain unanswered. How can you vote for something without knowing all the answers. We teach our children to learn all the facts before

making a decision. Please do the same and vote no for this proposal.

Christine Underbaggage, 47 Westwood Avenue – She stated that she was here as a Cranston teacher, resident, and parent in support of Cranston students, teachers, the art program, and her family. She grew up in Cranston. She has been an art teacher for eighteen years, and for the past four years in her hometown of Cranston. She has had the unique experience of teaching here at all grade levels. This has strengthened her belief in the power of the arts and the necessity of the art program throughout all grade levels in order to assist in the development of intelligent, well-rounded students – our future decision makers. This is true especially at the middle school where so much internal change takes place. This belief applies to those students who excel academically and those who struggle. Her career has involved extensive experience with students who are at risk of dropping out. Many of these students find great success in the arts. Art provides a vehicles for self-realization and confidence. Her sons, Jason and Charles, graduated from Cranston East. They carried their love of art and working in athletics from Park View to their high school years and beyond. The arts played a major role in the love of education. Likewise, her daughter, Rabina, is fortunately a 6th grader at Park View. As a parent and teacher, she completely supports the 6th grade in the middle school setting. Rabina is just as thrilled with transition to

middle school as her brothers were. She loves her band program and

is happy and proud to perform. The arts are an extremely important part of her education. She hopes that everyone is aware of the devastating effect that any future decreased art schedule in the middle school will have on the students in the art program. Please keep in mind the word devastating despite what you hear about how art and music will still be included. Even with the year-round decreased schedule, the contact time with students will be drastically reduced with a profound and lasting impact. She is proud to teach in the Cranston School System where the arts have been respected which is a sign of

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integrity and intelligence while other systems continue to make cuts. Appreciation for the arts is a sign of enlightenment, a path everyone wants to seek out and remain on even in the face of hard times. Her final comments are even more personal in nature. They concern the figures involved in an attempt to save a very small percentage of the budget. She will try to describe how those figures appear to her. She was finally able to purchase a house in Cranston two years ago at the age of 45. They couldn't be happier. As a single parent with no financial backup system, she looks up those numbers and sees an unsure future for her family in a house that they love. There is a thought that constantly haunts her these days along with the thoughts of those who fear the loss of positions. This may sound dramatic but be assured it is so true. In closing, she asked on behalf

of her students, her fellow teachers, and her family to see the value of the middle school, the arts program, and all the faces of the students and staff members who could be hurt as a direct result of some of the savings methods presented. She asked all of those making these decision to make them with the integrity and intelligence they possess and with the respect she knows they have for the heart and soul of Cranston Public Schools.

Teresa Jefferson, 41 Strathmore Road – She read the following statement: I am a parent of a third grader and Kindergartener at Rhodes School and a younger child who will attend Rhodes in two years. I have also taught elementary school and now work as a school psychologist. When I first heard about the proposed plan to move 6th graders to the elementary level, my only thought was one more year in our wonderful elementary school. However, as I talked with middle school parents, other parents, and students we all heard tonight from other very eloquent speakers who opened the discussion, I realized that sixth grade students will miss out on real educational opportunities if the 6th grade is moved. I also looked more closely at the changes it would cause at the elementary level--over-crowded classrooms and over-stretched facilities and resources. I decided to see how many people in my neighborhood felt the same and would oppose the move of the 6th grade to the elementary schools. I was overwhelmed at the response. In just a few days with little effort – mostly staying after school to talk with other parents, I realized how prevalent the feeling was against the

move; and I received over 100 signatures. I would like to give to you tonight this petition and urge you to listen to the people and the children of our city and not move the 6th grade to the elementary schools.

Mike Fox, Albert Avenue – He read the following statement: I have four boys in the Cranston School System. If someone were to ask me last year if I thought this proposal was a good idea I would have said it is a great idea because I was very happy with the education all my boys were getting at Rhode School in Edgewood. My oldest son who is at Park View had a great relationship with his teacher last year, and he still goes back to see him a couple of times a week to shoot the breeze with him. He was a great guy, and just about every day before school last year he would come in early and give his son extra help in math and other areas, too. The City of Cranston has some great

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teachers. They don't always get the PR they deserve. It is a thankless job sometimes. I also think you people have a tough job especially tonight. My sympathies are with you. There have been some good things said tonight, and I hope you have not made up your minds yet. I hope you are still listening. This year on the first day of school with my oldest son my wife and I were torn. We were this close to sending my son to St. Paul's. We had a spot saved for

him. We promised him that if he didn't like it, we would take him to St. Paul's which is very convenient for us. It is at the top of the street.

He was a mess on the first day of school. He got out of the car and was crying all morning and very upset. I don't know if my wife or my son was crying more. Mr. D noticed Jake's condition and went right up to him. Before Jake even got in the door, I think two other teachers came up to him. Since then it has been a complete turn around. He loves school. He loves his teachers. He made honors, and his father doesn't even know what a B looks like never mind an A. He is much more organized. He likes the changes; he needed the changes. He had a great relationship with his teacher last year. The kids at the 6th grade level are old enough; they are ready for a change and need a change—changing classes and changing teachers. It has been a great help for Jack this year; he loves school. He also participates in the band. I went to the Christmas concert which was very impressive. I was very proud of all the kids, not just my son. The jazz band which is the 7th and 8th grades were absolutely phenomenal; I couldn't believe how good they were. I stayed for the whole concert and thanked the band teacher.

Marie Birch, Family and Consumer Science Teacher – She stated that she is a teacher, a taxpayer, and the parent of a child who twenty years ago had difficulty transitioning from 6th grade to the middle school environment. When she started her career ten years ago she saw a need in the Cranston Public Schools for a program to transition 6th grade students to the junior high when she was working part time.

So, through a grant program, she developed a program called Transitional Learning Program because she thought it was so important for the students to get that experience or help with transitioning to the middle school level. She worked with all the feeder schools that fed into Bain Middle School at the time. Over the years, she has worked extensively with school reform. All the Carnegie Reports, Breaking Ranks, and Turning Points indicate that academic success is based on connections that students have with school with caring adults in the school. In order for them to be successful, they have to feel connected. For many of those where academics is a challenge for them and even the high performing students, that is those classes, the Family and Consumer Science classes, the technology education that is their connection to school. It is vitally important, although she appreciates the budgetary constraints, to try to work out a way to keep in tact those programs that are considered electives. She read into the record a letter from the Rhode Island Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. A copy of this letter is attached for the record.

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Jean Greco, 21 Hillcrest Drive – She read the following statement: I am a Cranston resident and the Program Supervisor of K-12 Guidance, an elementary school counselor for over 25 years and a

former 5th grade classroom teacher and 6th grade math teacher.

I stand before you tonight because I care. I care about our students. I care about the quality of education we provide to the students and families of Cranston. As you carefully weigh the arguments for and against reconfiguring our school system, I ask that you also recognize the importance of school counselors in students' lives.

School counselors support the vision and mission of Cranston Public Schools to enable all students to develop their potential and reach high standards in preparation for a successful future. Our school counseling standards in the academic, career and personal/social areas directly support student development. We are collaborators with administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and community members/agencies to help students reach their individual potential, make smooth transitions between schools and to careers and become contributing members of society.

With all due respect, the School Committee needs to share the vision of the importance of school counselors in helping students attain the mission of Cranston Public Schools. Without this shared vision, counseling positions will continue to be eliminated and adversely affect the positive impact our statewide acclaimed K-12 School Counseling Program has upon student success.

Let me give you an example. Last year the elementary counselors

designed and delivered a citywide bullying prevention program to all of our Kindergarten through fifth grade students. Over one-third (1,376) of these students participated in a cutting-edge collaborative research project with the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The predominant finding was that overall students district wide showed highly statistically significant gains in learning the bullying information counselors presented. Students' knowledge increased from 60% to 95% as measured by pre/post citywide common assessments.

Your decisions regarding school counselors are critical to the future success of our students. Did you know...? The recommended ratio for students to counselors is 250 to 1. Our current average 6th grade ratio is 300 to 1. Our current average K-5th grade ratio is 545 to 1. Elementary counselors are in 15 of our schools only two to two and one half days a week. Elementary counselor positions in Cranston have already been reduced by 20% over the past four years. Only 8.5 elementary counselor positions provide our outstanding elementary guidance program to over 4,639 students in seventeen elementary schools.

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So what are the ramifications to the School Counseling Program if you decide to return 6th graders to our elementary schools under the current proposals? Three sixth grade middle school counseling

positions will be eliminated because .4 will be allocated to help Western Hills improve the caseload ratio for 7th/8th grade students. Only one counselor will be added back for the projected 750 to 835 sixth graders in seventeen schools and in thirty-seven classrooms. Seven elementary schools will not receive any additional guidance support for their sixth graders. Ten elementary schools' guidance programs were already cut by one half day this school year due to your vote last spring. The average student/counselor ratios on the elementary level will increase to 577 to 1, and to 600 to 1 at some schools. At the very bare minimum 1.7 counselors are needed to be hired back to provide guidance support for 6th graders in all seventeen elementary schools.

So how will our sixth graders receive a fair and equitable school counseling program without increasing the number of school counseling positions? It is important for you to know that sixth grades have unique developmental issues whether they attend elementary or middle schools. By not addressing unique pre-adolescent developmental issues, helping overcome barriers to learning, teaching bullying prevention and equipping 6th graders with the organizational/study skills for a successful middle school transition, more issues will evolve. Increased discipline issues will detract principals' and teachers' focus from improving teaching and learning. Students whose needs are not met at an early age will have more significant difficulties when they reach middle school and high school.

In conclusion, I ask are you willing to share the vision that a transformed school counselor is an integral part of our schools and has a positive impact upon students' lives? Further reduction in the number of counselors will negatively impact the continued implementation of our exemplary state model of comprehensive school counseling.

Thank you for considering the importance of school counselors in your decision making. As you vote on this proposal, please consider what is best for all of our students, as this decision impacts not only 6th graders, but our Kindergarten to 8th grade students as well. Thank you.

Stephanie Culhane, 97 Concord Avenue – She stated that she is the proud mom of a 1st grader at Eden Park School and a daughter who will be starting Kindergarten next year and a six month old who will keep her in the school system for potentially the next eighteen years. The idea that she could potentially be standing here for the next eighteen years pleading to the school committee is daunting to her. People keep talking about a run-away train. She felt that everyone present knows that this train didn't leave in September; it didn't leave in 2004; it left a long time ago. What everyone needs to consider is that everyone wants to talk about the bottom line. She understands that it is a very difficult position for the schools to be short, but the schools are always short.

However, somehow her tax bill keeps going up every year. She is told every year that she has to pay more and more taxes, and every year more and more is cut in education. That is unacceptable; it needs to stop now. There will always be overcrowding in the schools, and the idea that every time there is an overcrowding issue this decision will have to be made is a scary thought for everyone here. She told the committee that they are their voice. Every time there is an overcrowding issue, this decision will have to be made; and it is a scary thought. The committee is their voice along with their elected officials. Everyone put them in the seats they are sitting in today. Most of the people here tonight are against this proposal. If there are people here tonight in favor of the proposal, she welcomed them to speak, but she doesn't hear their voice in majority which means if the committee doesn't speak for them who are in the majority they are rendering the people voiceless. She urged the committee to give this consideration and the time it needs. She is certain that the committee feels they have given it the time and consideration that it needs. The people don't feel confident, and they are the voice, and they need to be heard.

Chairman Traficante indicated that he would take comments from the School Committee at this time.

Mr. Stycos stated that he had some amendments to offer to the resolution and distributed them to the committee members. Mr. Stycos explained that these amendments had to do with the art and music, Waterman School, and technology and Family and Consumer Science.

Mr. Stycos echoed the comments about the funding problems where the committee has been basically left without any money. That has been a federal decision. There is a Congress and a President who voted to go to war in Iraq rather than fund the schools properly. There is a Governor and a Legislature that gave the districts no money at all this year. There was one bright spot in the Legislature, and he knew there would be disagreements tonight; but he hoped that the committee could agree on one thing and that is that there were several attempts at the Legislature to get the local schools a 3% increase. His state representative, Art Handy, stood up over the objections of the house leadership and tried to amend the budget so that the district would get the 3% increase. That is a gutsy thing to do, and he deserves everyone's appreciation. He also thinks that there were other mistakes made inside the City of Cranston. The astro turf was mentioned previously. He did talk with the Mayor about the astro turf, and he didn't get anywhere. One of those mistakes went on for years and years, and that was the failure of the City Council and the Mayors for years to properly fund the police and fire pensions. That failure made everyone happy. Tax increases weren't too big, but that failure withdraws about \$7 million to \$8

million a year out of the city budget to pay for

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what should have been paid and invested and what should have paid money for years and years. Now the city is finding it doesn't have money elsewhere. The second big mistake was the approval of the teachers' contract. The committee approved a contract that they didn't know how much it was going to cost, and it made the teachers happy because it was a very lucrative contract, but now there is a situation where there is no money, and there are pressures where the wages are going up and the income is not going up. Tonight is the result of that. He was not saying it to insult any teachers, but everyone has to face the facts that wages can't be raised without knowing how much it is going to cost and then have the city government and the state cut the funding and expect nothing to happen. As he listened to people send him e-mails and called, he thought about what the alternatives would be to this. People have said that it is just 1% of the budget; it is just \$1million and very small. That reminds him of a comment Everett Dirksen made, the Republican Majority Leader during the Johnson administration when Medicaid and Medicare were passed. He was a very fiscal conservative and said that a million dollars here, a million dollars there, and pretty soon you are talking about real money. So, this is

about real money. Mr. Stycos went on to say that he came up with some suggested alternatives, not necessarily ones that he would support. The committee could close Stone Hills School or Oak Lawn School, divide the school in half, and move those children to Hope Highlands and Orchard Farms. That would probably save \$300,000 to \$400,000. The committee could move portables around and close Arlington School. Together those two schools could save close to \$1 million. They could close the Charter School which would save a little less than \$1 million. They could ask the teachers to take a 1-1/2% to 2% pay cut which would be about \$1 million. They could eliminate half of the elementary school principals and have every elementary school principal cover two schools. That would cut about \$1 million. Or they could gradually increase class size, and he would worry about this, in the elementary, middle, and high schools. That he doesn't want to see. They could save money; instead of having twenty students, they could put twenty-five or twenty-eight students. Everyone can get an idea of the severity of the problem, and there aren't a lot of easy solutions. It isn't just a matter of looking hard and they will find the money. For those who remember, five years ago the School Committee considered cutting all extra-curricular activities and all sports, and that allegedly was needed to balance the budget. He opposed it and was the only member who opposed it. He opposed it because it was total balderdash. There were other alternatives. Now he doesn't see those alternatives. If he saw them, he would be putting them on the table if he thought they were better. He thinks there are disadvantages to this plan. Some of the minuses are that

there will be less specialized teachers, fewer specialty classes, emerging of tracks in the 6th grade, and more crowded elementary schools. There are some pluses, however, and that is preserving elementary schools in that they will not be able to physically close any elementary schools as they could now if the 6th grade is in the elementary schools. It also makes the middle schools smaller and more manageable. It helps the committee to reallocate their capital spending to building bigger schools to renovating them. It allows for more reading time at the elementary schools, and that is a tradeoff of the unified arts versus reading time. It puts the 6th

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graders in a more intimate setting, and it prevents worse cuts. He stated that he would be supporting this proposal, and he urged the other School Committee members to vote for it. When the time comes, he would like to discuss the amendments he distributed to the committee.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway stated that she tried to respond to all e-mails and phone calls. If she received any today after 1:00 p.m., she was unable to answer those. She has spoken to a lot of parents; she is a parent herself. Both of her children went through the current configuration in middle school. She also has some concerns about the content areas. She is hoping that the committee can address them later on. She will be supporting this tonight. She has

given it a lot of thought. She has given a lot of thought over a long period of time. She has tried to look at this from every angle she knows as an experienced parent with a pretty good view of the different types of challenges that the children face as well as the teachers and the parents. On balance, she felt that this is one of the more sensible things they can do at this point with the funding issues they are facing. She is not sure if people really grasp the extent of the fiscal difficulties that lie ahead. She doesn't think that this is meant to be a quick fix, and she wouldn't go for it if she didn't think it was sound on a number of levels. She will be supporting it tonight, and she thanked everyone who has taken the time to call her at home, e-mail her, talk to her, and meet with her personally. She is a parent, and she is still out there talking to friends, relatives, people who have children in the schools whether it is picking up her children from sports, walking in her neighborhood; she lives here too, and she is a parent and very concerned. This is one of the sounder things the committee can do, and she will be supporting it.

Mrs. Greifer asked the members of the audience how many were employees of the Cranston Public Schools and how many were not. This was personal curiosity on her part.

Mr. Archetto thanked everyone for coming to this meeting. He stated that this was a very difficult choice for everyone. It was not easy for anyone on this committee to make this vote. He has serious concerns about this. He felt that this plan was done very hastily

without much scientific analysis. When he went to middle school, it was built for 7th, 8th, and 9th. He asked if it would be that efficient with only two grades. He doesn't see the logic in busing five year old children around the city; he thought it was ludicrous. He listened to every word Mrs. Creta said regarding Gladstone School. It is a very difficult vote, but he feels there has to be other solutions. Mr. Stycos gave the committee alternatives but didn't mention other scenarios such as busing. He didn't mention to increase the radius of busing to reduce the expense. He didn't mention redistricting the schools. One individual said it well when he commented that the committee is using a band-aid approach for something that needs a long-term assessment. This is a very hasty decision.

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Ms. Iannazzi stated that the committee has been swamped with e-mails and phone calls. For the record, she stated that despite what is being felt here tonight, she probably received more phone calls and e-mails in support of the 6th grade move than in opposition to. She clarified some comments made earlier. One speaker said that to her knowledge most of the committee members didn't have children in the school district. Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway is the only one currently with a daughter in the school system. However, they all have kids they know in the school system. She has two cousins in the school system. Everyone is here because they all care about kids. It was

said that the committee didn't spend substantial time visiting with their constituents. She attended six open houses, went to PTO meetings, met privately with teachers at Woodridge School and Garden City School. She met at any parent's request with them. Over the past few weeks, she has received approximately 200 to 300 e-mails. The committee is listening to everyone. They might disagree with what the public is saying, but they are still listening.

Chairman Traficante called a recess at 9:00 p.m.

Chairman Traficante reconvened at 9:20 p.m.

Ginny Smith, 35 Sweetbriar Drive – She stated that she had e-mailed everyone on the committee. She wasn't going to speak tonight, but she needed her voice to be heard although it is so distressing because it feels like the decision is going to go right through. The public outcry is unbelievable. She started coming to meetings last spring because she heard that the 6th grade and the middle school model was going to be drastically changed and tracking, as it is known, would be gone. A committee was formed to look at that. All of a sudden she started hearing that the 6th grade was going to move to the elementary school. They are going to start busing Kindergarteners. She couldn't believe it. The committee was supposed to look at tracking and nothing else. She wondered if the elementary schools had been consulted. She asked about the

Kindergarteners. In her elementary school, it won't affect her at that level but she asked how the school is going to handle incoming classes that will be potentially higher. She read the following comments: I believe we are just moving an over-crowded middle school and essentially over-crowding our elementary schools. I agree with the dissenting report given by the parents who served on this committee. I feel that before any decision can be made more information is needed. The problem is this – the middle schools in Cranston are overcrowded. This should not be fixed by over-crowding our elementary schools. I was at that meeting for the City Council. When you are talking about the \$1 million that you are saving, are we really saving money in this move? It seems like more information is needed regarding the ultimate financial savings of such a move. These are some of my questions, and I am just a parent. Will we have to buy more desks at the elementary schools? Will there be an increase in needs and costs for busing? What will the financial impact be of more students at the elementary schools? Will there be an increase for heat, water, and electric? Can the

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cafeterias hold more students? Will more lunches be needed and more tables? If every penny counts, we have to look at every penny. Did I understand it correctly at the last meeting when it was stated that portables are very expensive to heat and cool costing \$10,000 each a year to run? This will certainly impact the elementary schools'

budget. With regard to library needs for sixth graders, this needs to be addressed at the elementary schools. Will the present itinerant teachers in the elementary schools costs need to be increased? Could we add a few classrooms to the buildings? Could we add a wing to Western Hills?

Barbara Smith-White, 27 Raven Circle – She stated that she has three children in this school system, one at the middle school and two at the elementary level. She thought everyone did a great job tonight speaking their minds and touching upon everything everyone feels in their heart. She was coming to the School Committee because the voice out here is saying they do not want this, and the committee is elected officials; and the public is saying to them that this is not what we want. There would be many of the public who would come up with more creative ways in which to save some of this money. There are parents and children throughout this whole community who have come to the committee over the last five months saying that they do not want this, and she feels it is an easy decision for the committee to make. The answer is no because that is what their public is asking.

Donna Mooney, 100 Oakland Avenue – She stated that she is a life-long resident of Cranston. She attended Gladstone School, Bain, and Cranston East. She has three children, one at Park View, one in 5th grade at Eden Park. She stated that she would finish a statement for a gentlemen who spoke earlier. It states: It is somewhat

disheartening this evening as according to a Providence Journal article this week three members of this committee, including its Chairman, have already committed their vote without listening to the public comments. This is your decision, however. I am sure many of the people sitting in this auditorium and following this at home have already decided who they won't be voting for in the next election. You are thinking that our memory will be short, but playing with our children's education we will not forget. In closing, the school superintendent said at the last meeting that status quo was not working and is worse than no change at all. The very informed former chairwoman of this committee, Jackie White, whose warning should be heeded, deserves repeating. You can ruin the city's reputable school system with one vote. You are not ready to approve this move. We are not ready to accept it, and Austin and Jake are counting on you to make the right call. I and my children and everyone here say do not vote for this. You are not informed and please reconsider.

Representative Arthur Handy, 26 Welfare Avenue – He stated that he has a 3-1/2 year old who in 2009 will be going into elementary school. He indicated that he doesn't tend to come to council meetings or school committee meetings mostly because of his son in school. Because his constituents are concerned about it, he thought he would

lend some thoughts as well. He went to middle school in Richmond, Virginia in 1978, and it was a 6th, 7th, and 8th system. He can remember the difference he had going into 6th grade, and there are lot of things in it he would like to protect his son from; but in the end it was a dramatically better education, and it set him up for where he is today. From personal experiences as a legislator, he knows that what the committee is dealing with is very difficult. The financial challenges they face are as extreme as the legislators will be facing during this session. He told of a budget experience this past session whereby in the budget they passed they decided to send 17 year olds to the ACI. That policy decision was made to save money. He believed that what the School Committee is talking about will save money. Some people have gone to the ACI that shouldn't have, and it is something that can be reversed. One of the anxieties he is concerned with is that the change being discussed is one that is very difficult to go back from. To realize in a short time that it was the wrong decision will be very expensive to reverse that decision, and he urged the committee to not do that. He pledged that he is going to

fight, and he will have a lot more time to fight to get funding for the City of Cranston and all the schools in the state. By passing the increases to the budget, they are increasing city taxes. He called upon everyone present to get in touch with their local legislators. He urged the committee not to make the decision now. It is one where the committee is rushing with layoff notices. There are ways to make

it work. He respects the service the committee members have given. He has a lot of respect for his School Committee, but in this regard, it is the wrong decision.

Rosa LeClair, Lexington Avenue – She read the following: I am the proud mother of two daughters. My older daughter is a 10th grader at East; my younger child is a 5th grader at Eden Park. When her daughter went to Park View, she lost all her extra-curricula activities. She missed out on a lot at Park View. Now you want to rip off my fifth grader because this morning when she asked me if I was going to this meeting, she said, Please mom let those people know that I am ready to move on. She is ten years old. She has had an incredible education in elementary school, but the teachers did what they were supposed to do. They got her ready to move on. She has an amazing 5th grade teacher, and she is learning so much because it is her teacher's job to get her ready for middle school, and her teacher has done that. It is not fair to the kids, and it is not fair that we are speaking and so many of you have made up your minds. My daughter is affected by what you all decide. My tenth grader is an awesome basketball player, and I have to pay for her to play in a league. She was afraid to do it in high school because she didn't get to do it in middle school. For three years she has gotten ripped off. I want my ten year old to have chances and not to be screwed out of a good middle school education.

Annette Born, 51 Community Drive – She stated that she is the parent

of a 5th grader at Chester Barrows. Due to her involvement in the school, she has had the opportunity to observe the process. She attended two of the study committee meetings. She

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thanked in particular her School Committee member, Steve Stycos, Deb Greifer who is a School Committee representative on the CEAB, and to all the enjoyable exchanges she has had with the majority and minority members of the study committee. She has enjoyed discussing this and truly knows that everyone has the best intentions of the school district and the children in mind. With that in mind, there are two things she has as major concerns; and she urged time and consideration for them. This maybe a \$1 million solution, but it maybe a \$1 million solution of a \$4, \$5, \$6 million problem that the district will have. There needs to be a holistic solution. Hopefully the 6th graders will have to go back to the middle school, and maybe there will be further cuts, and a need to have larger classrooms; but everyone needs to engage in this process together and make that decision together. Maybe because of union negotiations, there isn't time. She urged the committee to look into their hearts and think about what those further frightening choices might be that Mr. Stycos so eloquently put out tonight and that Mr. Archetto has more thoughts about. There is more of a budget gap to solve. She indicated that no one has heard from the elementary principals. They

have heard from the middle school principals. She questioned the time of implementation of moving.

She asked if all the moving around had been thought out. She is still unconvinced that the costs and savings are provable, and given the imbalance of the problem; i.e. how many empty classrooms are on the western side of the city, it doesn't inspire confidence that the planning for this particular move is not going to experience a similar sort of problem in a short period of time. She implored everyone present, whether they are parents with a second job, or a public official, or school administration, or union teachers, that this problem needs to be solved together. Rhode Island needs to think outside the box.

Debbie McKeon, 43 Beech Avenue – She stated that her son is currently in 5th grade, and her daughter is in 2nd grade at Waterman Elementary School. When she was first asked what she thought about 6th grade moving back to the elementary level, she thought it was great. She would get to keep her kids in that little room in Waterman School for an extra year. However, months have passed since she was first asked, and she knows she wants more now than she did back then. She is very uncomfortable with the proposed changes. She understands that times are tough, and she understands that moving the 6th grade back is supposed to be a cost savings measure. She asked if it was going to save as much as predicted. Often times what appears to be a cost saving measure does not live up to its expectations. In addition, she asked how the

committee could recommend moving 6th grade back to ease overcrowding at middle school only to create overcrowding at the elementary level. It sickens her to think that the middle school may become less crowded, but several elementary schools may not. Now her children who are at Waterman may not be able to spend their 6th grade year at their home school. She was happy that other schools may feel less of a burden. Right now her son is in 5th grade at Waterman, and he has made strong connections to staff and students; and because of the proposed measure, he may have to transition to Eden Park for one year as will her daughter. She asked what the benefit is of having him

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transitioned to one school for only one year, and she asked the committee if they were going to help the 5th grade class make that transition for one year and then transition on from there. She felt that the proposal was rushed and short-sighted. If one were to visit her son's 5th grade classroom tomorrow or any time next week, she asked if the committee members could look him in the eye and tell him that they voted to put the 6th grade back in elementary level and tell him that he is going to spend 6th grade, the last year of his elementary school, at Eden Park which is not his home school. He cannot walk home from school any longer even though he could since third grade. She asked if they could tell him that the art and music programs that are available at the middle school level may not

be available to him when he finally gets there and look him in the eye and tell him that this is for his benefit.

Robert Clarkin, 58 Strathmore Road – He stated that he debated whether or not he would read what he had written, and he would in the hopes that the committee would make a decision in the best interest of the children. He read the following statement: I am not here tonight because my youngest sister is a 6th grade resource teacher at Park View, and she is extremely concerned about her and your most vulnerable students who will be hurt by this move back to elementary school; and I am not here tonight

because my better half is a 1st grade teacher at Dutemple. I am here tonight as the father of one daughter who attended Park View for three years and is at Cranston East, and two daughters who are currently at Park View. I believe that the school district's future 6th graders deserve the same as my children. Five years ago my family was very concerned about our oldest daughter attending Park View for 6th grade. I know this is a concern of many parents. Simply put it was an unfounded concern as I had come to know and appreciate the 6th grade team and most of the faculty at Park View. I am so impressed with the dedication and all of their extras that they perform from the band, to robotics, to technology, to dance chaperoning that this staff does above and beyond. One month ago my family attended the Christmas Concert that a parent had talked about and asked if we are we going to lose that expertise. To the seven members of this committee, I ask you to consider this question as

most of New England will watch the Patriots this Sunday afternoon. After this season, should Bob Kraft sign Cam Cameron from the one in fifteen Miami Dolphins or pay Bill Belichick more money to stay with the team. It is an analogy only to illustrate that your middle school model has been successful just like the Patriots. When you look at the scores and the fact that all three middle schools are high performing, that is success just like the Patriots. Tom Brady is playing for less money with the Patriots than he could get elsewhere because he knows he is only as good as the other team players. This is very important. I fully appreciate the fact that Western Hills is crowded. Growing up in a family of ten with one shower was also crowded. We made adjustments growing up, and students at Western Hills, I know, have also adjusted. To now make all eighteen elementary schools overcrowded seems to be making the problem eighteen times worse. I certainly understand the financial issue. I do wish, however, that I had a majority report that showed those numbers to have a better idea.

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Catherine Ambler, 28 Salem Drive, North Providence – She stated that she is proud to say that she has taught as a substitute teacher or as a full English teacher in the

Cranston Public Schools since 1979 both at the junior high school and high school levels and now transitioning in the past eight years to middle school. She read the following statement: Tomorrow I will

ask the students I teach at Hugh B. Bain, have you done your homework? Do you remember those dreaded words? Have you done your homework? While I am not insensible to the work you have done, and I ask, is it all done? I doubt that any high school teacher in this system would ask one of her classes to right a term paper in a week. With that analogy, is what I believe you are attempting to do. It took two years to plan middle school. You are thinking of dismantling it with less than a year of homework behind you. I am not insensible to the financial issues at stake. I too pay bills. However, as Mrs. Jackie White suggested to you at the last meeting, there are hidden costs that will most certainly eat into your projected savings, and I have been thinking about them since August. In addition to the busing issue raised by Mrs. White, I too believe it is going to cost you a lot of extra money in busing to accomplish your plans. I recognize the following potential problems. If you put Head Start at Bain which is in one of your plans, do you realize that you will have to put in toilets and sinks for smaller folk as well as paper, furniture, and classrooms and cafeteria. Have you considered the cost of moving the portables? Are you prepared for the hours of overtime you will have to pay to an already understaffed custodial department in order to move the teachers involved between buildings. When I packed up for the summer to accommodate the summer school, I had thirty boxes, three book shelves, and four filing cabinets. My colleagues will attest that it will, indeed, be a problem to move me. Are you prepared for that overtime? It took three teacher jamborees, if I remember correctly, to make middle school staffing

happen. They don't come cheap, I'm sure. Do you know what it will cost to staff the changes you plan? There are more, most certainly, but your homework hasn't found them yet. However, I am here as a middle school English teacher. The City of Cranston pays me to teach and also pays me for my professional opinion on matters of education so here it is in short. The three middle schools in Cranston have all recently attained the status of high performing schools. At the risk of having some of my students still here in this auditorium assign me corrective homework tomorrow, I ask you to consider this: if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Joanne Spaziano, 20 Boxwood Avenue – She stated that she had sent minutes and questions to all members of the School Committee. She thanked Ms. Iannazzi for being the only one who returned her e-mail. Mr. Stycos in the past has returned them. Unfortunately, she has not heard back at all from the rest of the members. She read the following: My questions have not been answered in depth, and these are the ones I have come up with: What exactly is the math instruction going to be? I am a math teacher. Will it be the Glencoe series which we currently use, or is it going to be the Investigations Math? Currently, some of the middle school classes use the College Board Spring Board Program. Will this still be available to us and what will the costs

be? For science instruction, will the same books that are used in the middle schools be used or will there be kits or some type of units that will meet the grade level expectations from the State Department of Education? How much will it cost to ramp up the science program to allow our students to meet the demands of new science testing? How about social studies – will this even be a part of the elementary curriculum? What books will be used and how many times a year will they have to change these books? How much time will be allotted for these subjects? My questions could go on and on. English instruction-how will this be approached? Will the vast assembly of books available for all readers be available at the elementary libraries? What about students reading far above grade level? Will they need to provide their own books? Can the library accommodate their needs? How much will it cost us to ramp up those libraries? Math, science, and English are the curricula areas that will be tested by the State in the fall. Will we be ready? What about guidance counselors? We have already heard about that. What about transportation? I run the NEED Program at Park View, and it is a state and nationally recognized education arm of the State Department of Energy. I know that those transportation costs are going to be very high. We all have to pay those oil bills, don't we? There is always going to be costs associated with any change, but I still would like to hear from the administration where the funds will come from. Is there anyone who will be able to give us these answers before the final vote is taken? On a last note, are you familiar with the book "The Little Engine that Could?" It's about

a train. The 6th grade teachers are The Little Engine that Could” – I think I can, I think I can. I know I can make a difference in the life of a child.

Janice Ruggieri, 45 Overhill Road – She thanked the committee for giving her another chance to speak. She also thanked the committee for answering her e-mails. It’s been a busy week, and she is trying to understand a lot of these issues. She understands the budget problem, and she also understands that it is not the committee’s budget problem – it is the state’s budget problem and the federal government’s problem. That is where everyone needs to fight the budget problem. However, this is not the answer. She believed that there are other solutions, and Mr. Stycos mentioned some. Here are a couple more. Remove the vice principals any way. There are six plus at West alone. Cut sports--sorry, but that is a larger savings than this plan can ever give you. Redistrict western Cranston. She doesn’t know why the committee won’t even consider this. The overcrowding issue is not an eastern side problem. If that is the issue, deal with the western side of the city. She still believes the real issue is the fact that the committee already decided a curriculum change, and they are trying to find a way to fit it in the middle school. For all the budget meetings that have happened, she has been there. She has made herself known, and some of the committee members know that. Representative Nick Mattiello today in the paper noted that he is heading a committee to investigate unfunded mandates through the state to find out what can be done about those problems. That’s how

to deal with a budget issue; not this plan. It doesn't work. She wants to make sure that when her daughter goes to 6th grade in September that the committee has a plan for her. This is the problem she sees.

The previous speaker

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mentioned curriculum issues; she has not heard one curriculum plan for these teams. There are other things that can be done. She asked about the students at Western Hills who are on permit. There are quite a few of them there. Maybe they need to go back where they are supposed to be. The budget numbers are inaccurate and incomplete.

To Mr. Stycos, she told him she has the utmost respect for him, but it is not really the parents' fault that he signed a contract that he really didn't read for the teachers. If the numbers then weren't accurate, he should have questioned and questioned; that is what he is supposed to do. She can't see that this plan is something the committee can vote on without knowing what their next step is. She has not seen the next step.

Mrs. Jacqueline White, 36 Wain Street – She read the following statement: I stand before you tonight to address Resolution No. 8-1-2, although, sad to say, I believe my efforts are in vain, and the voices of many students, teachers, parents, and grandparents are being disregarded and falling on deaf ears. After reading the Providence Journal article in Tuesday morning's edition, it appears

that the two public meetings are just a dog and pony show to appease the dissenting public opinion. Since now four of you have already made up your minds, I don't know what we are doing here because, obviously, you four people feel you are very informed. Well, tonight, I am not going to read my questions. I would appreciate if the four of you would take the questions and answer them in public (Mrs. White distributed a copy to each member) so that we feel that you are making an informed decision. To Ms. Iannazzi, you said that you had all these people saying how wonderful it was. Where are they? Why aren't they here? This whole scenario started off as a joke. The sub-committee made up of four School Committee members, a majority mind you, made up of three middle school principals who have nothing but to accept it or else. No elementary school principals, and they are the ones most affected. Two parents, and they came out with a better dissenting report than all of you put together, and two union leaders. Tell me that wasn't a trumped up sub-committee, but we already knew what the answer was going to be before they even started. It's a joke; the whole thing is a joke. You are a shameful bunch, all of you. You are not prepared to make the major move at this time. The plans have not been thought through enough, and you obviously have not had enough time to explore it and seek proper information to make an informed decision. If you accept this proposal tonight, which we know you are because you have four votes, this school system as a whole will be left in the wake of your thoughtless decisions. Please reconsider, those four of you who are smirking and smiling right now. When you come to get our

votes next time whether it be for Council or School Committee, I will personally work against you. One of you live in my ward; one of you is at large.

For the record, Ms. Iannazzi stated that Mrs. White was incorrect in her statement about the committee formation. There were three parents and two administration members to be appointed by the Superintendent so that was reversed. Mr. Stycos added that four is not a majority of eleven.

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Frank Flynn, CTA President – He thanked the committee for this opportunity to speak. He stated that he was limiting his comments for the most part to some corrections and to some things that have been said tonight. For the last eighteen years in his professional career of thirty-one years, he has been in a leadership position with the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, and he has stood with administration and the school committee on many occasions trying to get increased funding for the Cranston Public Schools. He will continue to do so because he feels it is important to work together no matter what the outcome is of tonight's decision. As Mr. Clarkin and a number of other speakers had mentioned, this is a huge undertaking in order to access appropriate funding, and a lot of decisions that the committee will have to make in the next several

months will be very difficult, perhaps even more difficult than tonight's decision. Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway mentioned earlier that people don't understand the breadth of the decisions the committee will have to make, and it is very difficult. He echoed the sentiment of many of the teachers and parents tonight that he doesn't see any educational benefit to this decision. It doesn't mean that they won't have to make decisions that are unbeneficial to the Cranston Public Schools. He wanted to assure the parents that if they do make this ill-advised decision that their students will continue to receive a wonderful education in the elementary schools because that is what Cranston teachers do; they provide a quality education in whatever setting they are in. He qualified that by saying that he believed the students would be better served with the 6th graders in the middle schools with teaming and with the subject specific certified teachers who are better able to prepare those students for high school and the assessments they will have to take. He asked to clarify a point that was made last week

by Steve Stycos that one of the reasons this might be beneficial is because the elementary schools are smaller learning communities. There is no better example of a smaller learning community than teaming at the middle school. Teaming provides a group of four to six teachers who work with a specific group of kids. Every day they are better able to keep an eye on those kids. They have team planning that allows them to better interact with those students to provide a better level of service than an elementary school necessarily would. That is a myth that it is a better and smaller

learning community. With regard to special education inclusion this model at the middle school, he wrote the original grant that included the model when it was Park View Junior High School. He was there also when it was transitioned to a middle school. The model at the middle school is the best inclusion model that there is in this city. There isn't that same level at the elementary schools. It was stated that the district does have it, but it is not the same level of service, teacher and student together. With regard to scheduling, everyone must collectively address the changes in the schedule whether the 6th grade stays or goes. They need to sit down and work collaboratively. Don't say that this is a reason why that justifies the 6th grade move. He recognized the difficulty they will have doing this, and there are going to be many similar meetings. They need to work together to go to the legislature and to the City Council to get more money for the schools. They full funded every single initiative on the city side last year

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– every single contract and every single program; they ignored the school department, and everyone has to fight to get more money.

Ken Bowling, Cranston Teachers' Alliance – He stated that he had a very lengthy written statement that he was going to abandon because it has all been said. He wished to finish Mr. Clarkin's statement

because his three minutes were up. He read from Mr. Clarkin's statement: I have not heard one person yet who thinks this is a good idea academically for the students. The test scores prove that the middle school system is working. Specialized teaching by four individuals continues to benefit our students. Secondly, do 6th graders belong with 1st and 2nd graders socially? 1st and 2nd graders are writing letters to Santa Claus and looking for the Easter bunny. 6th graders are testing everyone and dealing with life and body changes. The vast majority of the school budget is made up of salary and benefits for staff. You must make them part of the financial solution. Mr. Bowling added to that, you must make us part of this issue as well. To dovetail into what Mr. Clarkin said with his own personal remarks here. As a member of this study committee, he didn't think they studied anything. He believed that they were a sounding board for the administration's proposal. They didn't have adequate time to review or scrutinize or get into the business of what they are trying to address here. He was a part of the study committee and the initiatives and school improvement for his entire tenure, professional development, always trying to make things better. The ultimate question is what is best for the kids. None of this is about what is best for the kids. He knows it is a money issue, and as Mr. Stanton spoke to last time, if they were supposed to be worrying about money, that is what they should have been studying. That is not what they did. As a union man and as a working man, he knows what it is to work in partnership with others. His president just spoke to that quite well. He wanted to reiterate that point. This is a common

problem that requires

everybody at the table to have a voice. He felt disenfranchised by the process that he was just part of for the past five months. He doesn't believe that it was genuine. He believes that there were plans in place before they sat down. He may be disagreed with, and that is fine; he is entitled to his opinion given the evidence he has seen. His point is that this is a rushed decision. Yes, there is a financial issue, but this is not going to solve the problem for this year. This is going to put a piece on it. Many people have spoken to the fact that it is not substantiated yet that it is \$1 million. They don't have a true cost. All of the factors have not been brought to the table. They are rushing to judgment; they are moving too fast; and they are going to make a mess; and the kids will pay the price. It is not fair. Please defeat this proposal.

Beth Donovan, 83 Concord Avenue – She stated that she came to this meeting intending not to speak, but she felt she needed to get up. Everything everyone has said here she agreed with. She is against the move, and Jackie White gave a great speech. She said what Mrs. Donovan had written down. She reiterated her questions as to where are the people who are for this move. She asked if there was anyone in the audience who was for this move. None of them are here. She asked if it was because

if they read the newspaper articles, did they think they didn't need to go and say their piece because the vote has already been done and decisions made.

Susan Cianci, 18 Winchester Avenue, 6th Grade Resource Teacher at Park View Middle School – She stated that she is heartbroken that this decision has been made. Everyone here has voiced outcry against this move. She implored the School Committee to visit their elementary schools to spend a day to see the life of a 5th grader and visit the middle schools to see the life of a 6th, 7th, and 8th grader for the day to compare programs. She hasn't seen anyone do that at her middle school, and she invited them to do it. She indicated that she wished to finish her brother's speech, Mr. Clarkin. She read as follows: I thought about all the middle school and the elementary school principals who probably have been tossing and turning trying to get some sleep over this move. I thought how disappointed I am in the lack of courage to speak up in public how they fear for their jobs if they dare to speak out. I thought how sad to live in this great country to be afraid to speak because of fear. I thought about young men dying in Iraq and Afghanistan for people they don't even know to give them the right of free speech. The most important thing in any school is the leadership or lack of leadership of our principals. The lack of leadership from our school principals is scary.

IX. Action Calendar / Action Agenda

**SPONSORED BY THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATION
NO. 08-1-2 – RESOLVED, that the 6th grade classes be housed in the elementary schools and that the middle school model will consist of the 7th and 8th grades commencing with the 2008-2009 school year.**

Moved by Ms. Iannazzi and seconded by Mr. Stycos that this Resolution be adopted.

Mrs. Greifer commented that she was going to be voting no on this issue for a couple of main reasons. She has struggled with this a great deal especially since she chaired the sub-committee. She tried very very hard on that sub-committee to make sure that everybody had a voice; everyone was heard; that this was not a rubber stamp job. She is sorry that Mr. Bowling felt it was, but she even abstained from voting to try to maintain her neutrality on the committee. She is not going to vote for this because she truly believed that 6th graders do better in middle school. This was confirmed last week when she went to two concerts at Bain. Middle school is her favorite level of schooling; she loves the kids there. However, given the dire financial straights, she felt this was something that they needed to continue to look at because she is not convinced that they spent enough time on this to get all the information that would possibly have made her think that they needed to make this move for financial reasons. She would love to make every decision based solely on what is best educationally for the kids, but this is Cranston, and they can't. At this time, she is voting against this. They need to study a lot of things.

Things are going to happen to this school system that nobody is going to

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like unless the district can get some relief from the city and from the state. Everyone can help the committee. Help support them in their efforts to get more money so they don't have to have these conversations and go through this. Thank you all for taking the time to come out and stay so late to share your views with the committee.

Mr. Stycos stated that he respected Mrs. Greifer's right to vote however she pleases. He found it astounding that she chaired the committee; she never said that she thought there wasn't enough time taken to study this; and then tonight tell the committee that there isn't enough time.

Mr. Stycos stated that he had some amendments. He wanted to present the amendments but at the same time was torn whether or not they should actually go forward. The first amendment has to do with the middle school music and art programs. To understand this amendment, one needs to realize that there are two unified arts periods in the day. So that is ten classes a week (5×2). There are 3 days of physical education and health that are required. They have decided to have a foreign language program that is 4 days a week; that makes 7 out of the 10, and that leaves 3 days a week. At the last

meeting, Mr. Colozzi spoke about music and that with the current scenario No. 4 that has been proposed by administration calls for a quarter of music three times a week in the 6th and 7th grade. He learned after the meeting by going to Park View and talking with Mr. DeCristofaro and Mr. Colozzi through e-mail, in order for the music program to work, it has to be every week. A student can't take an instrument and be in band for one quarter and then not do it for three quarters, and then do it for a quarter in 8th grade; that doesn't work.

Mr. Stycos's amendment would require the middle school schedule for 2008-2009 to include one class a week of music so that the band and choral programs for the 7th and 8th grades remain in tact; there would be no changes to that. This amendment would do the same with art; it would be a minimum of once a week but that the administration would have the flexibility to have it once a week all year or doing it for two days a week

for half of the year, however the schedule would work. He pointed out that the middle school schedule would have one day a week of music so that the music program would be in tact, and there would be a similar amount of art over the year.

Mr. Stycos moved that the middle school schedule shall include one class per week of music and one class a week of art (or an equivalent number of days of art per year.)

Ms. Iannazzi asked if Mr. Stycos was suggesting that administration

look into this right now because this was not a curriculum discussion tonight. Mr. Stycos responded that he was not offering it as a suggestion; he was offering it as a policy decision by the School Committee.

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Ms. Iannazzi suggested that this be discussed at the School Committee meeting on January 22nd so that the committee will have more time to discuss it.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway seconded the motion. Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway withdrew her second to the motion. Mr. Lombardi stated that he agreed with Ms. Iannazzi. The \$64 question on the Resolution should be resolved first. In the event it should pass, there will be a work session in the very near future to develop the logistics of how this will work.

Mr. Traficante commented that he had no objection to Mr. Stycos discussing these three potential amendments in the future. He asked that this agenda be moved to the work session, but they could be discussed tonight.

Mr. Stycos continued to explain that what everyone should realize

about the Unified Arts Program is that the students could have art every day of the week, but there is Team Time. They listened to all the speakers, but no one said they have to have team time. That is because in some classes the team time is not used well; it is used for homework. A high school teacher teaches five periods of a subject, and a middle school teacher teaches four periods and then has team time. Some of the middle school teachers use team time well and offer an educational program, even though it isn't a curriculum, but every day they offer some kind of worthwhile program. Others use it for silent reading and homework or other things. Everyone needs to realize that if the Union were to step forward and say that the teachers would teach five full periods, and instead of having team time and study skills, they would have time for art every day or music three days a week and art three days a week. There isn't an optimal schedule because of the restrictions of the union contract. Mr. Traficante interrupted and asked the public to listen because if this resolution passed these particular items would be discussed at a work shop; and they possibly could be implemented. In that way, Mr. Flynn can come forward and address the issue being knowledgeable tonight on what is going to be discussed.

Mr. Stycos went on to say that he was proposing to direct the Superintendent to prepare a middle school schedule by February 15 for consideration by the School Committee that requires students to take, or gives them the option to take, family and consumer science and technology classes. If everyone took art

once a week and music a week combined with the gym and the foreign language, there is one period left per week. The options are that there could be one day a week of family and consumer science for part of the year for one of the grades, and the same with technology; or they could bunch the art for half a year for two days a week and then have family and consumer science two days a week for half of the year, and in another grade do it with technology. Or, they could try to devise a schedule to give students the option of instead of taking a foreign language taking technology or family and consumer science. If that amendment were to pass, it would be asking the administration to come up with a schedule where that

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would be possible, and then the School Committee could review that schedule and decide whether or not it was a good idea.

Mr. Stycos presented a third proposal for discussion, and he was surprised that no speaker brought it up. There needs to be more public input regarding how to handle the situation at Waterman School. The proposal that the administration has made would have the Kindergartners at Waterman go to Garden City School because of lack of room and then return to Waterman School for 1st grade through 6th grade. An alternative to that would be to have Waterman School stay a K to 5 school and have the 6th grade go to Eden Park School. This needs to be looked at more. He felt there were advantages to the 6th grade going to Eden Park School. One of the

advantages of this would be that the younger children would go to the home elementary school. This came out of an experience he had with the Barrows' parents and the arguments they made that changed his mind about this. It keeps K to 5 in one place; it gives four 6th grades at Eden Park which would give an opportunity to do some teaming between the 6th grade teachers; it also leaves an extra room at Garden City that could be used for music and art or resource. He personally felt that the Waterman neighborhood was more aligned with the Eden Park neighborhood than the Garden City neighborhood. When the committee talks about this, he would like to hear from parents about one configuration over another.

Mr. Archetto stated that in good conscience he could not support this resolution. He doesn't think it is in the best interest of the students. He took umbrage to what Mrs. White said; every member of this committee puts in a lot of hours and a lot of work for no compensation. Another constituent said that he didn't return her e-mail. If she knew the number of calls he received, over eighty-six pieces of e-mail; he usually returns his constituents' e-mail. He referred to a comment made earlier by Mr. Stycos to straighten out the budget to take a 2% pay cut. He should include the administration and central administration and the administrators with a 5% decrease in their salaries. There are other alternatives instead of gutting a program. This will not do the children any good; he felt they were going backwards.

This Resolution was adopted with Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Stycos, Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway and Mr. Traficante in favor; Mr. Archetto and Mrs. Greifer were opposed.

NO. 08-1-16 – RESOLVED, that the 2008-2009 Capital Budget, as recommended by the Superintendent, be approved.

CAPITAL BUDGET 2008-2009

BOND 04 – 25

Cranston High School West – Sprinklers \$2,400,000

Western Hills Middle School – Sprinklers

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BOND 04 – 25

Cranston High School West – Bleachers \$ 150,000

BOND 427/529

Park View – Renovate Library \$ 100,000

Renovate Science Rooms \$1,700,000

Bain / Park View / Western Hills

BOND 04 – 25

Relocate and renovate four (4) portable \$ 400,000

**classrooms; 2 at Woodridge School and 2
at Arlington School
\$4,750,000**

Moved by Ms. Iannazzi to adopt this resolution.

Mr. Traficante called a recess at 10:25 p.m.

Mr. Traficante reconvened the meeting at 10:26 p.m.

Ms. Iannazzi withdrew her motion.

**Moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mr. Stycos and unanimously
carried to table this resolution.**

X. New Business

There was no new business.

XI. Public Hearing on Non-agenda Items

No public speakers on non-agenda items.

XII. Announcement of Future Meetings

XIII. Adjournment

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

**There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at
10:30 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Andrea M. Iannazzi
Clerk**

NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL 4213

**NON-CERTIFIED SUPERVISORY AND
CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE POLICY**

This document is designed to outline the policies, practices and procedures governing non-certified supervisory and confidential personnel, hereinafter referred to as employees. It is the employee's responsibility to make themselves familiar with the contents of this policy.

This policy is not an express or implied contract of employment. The Cranston School Committee reserves the right to change, modify or delete any provisions of this employee policy in accordance with its by-laws. Either the school department with school committee approval or the employee may terminate the employment relationships at any time with or without notice or cause. The Superintendent subject to the approval of the School Committee has the authority to enter into written agreements regarding the length of employment or grounds for termination.

Probationary Period

All new employees who fall within this job category are required to serve a probationary period of six months from their date of hire. This is designed to give the employee and supervisor a period of time to determine the potential for continuing employment with the school district.

Work Day

The normal work shift is eight and one-half (8 ½) hours, half an hour of which is an unpaid meal period. The employee is not eligible for overtime. Compensatory time or “Comp Time” programs are prohibited unless authorized by the Chief Operating Officer.

Performance Appraisals

Upon completion of the first year of employment and each year thereafter, the employee’s job performance will be formally evaluated by his\her supervisor. This appraisal will become a part of the permanent personnel record.

Merit Increases

Wage increases will be based upon the merit of the employee’s job performance. A budgeted percentage will be recommended by the Superintendent and will be subject to the approval of the Cranston School Committee.

NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL 4213 Cont.d

**NON-CERTIFIED SUPERVISORY AND CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE
POLICY CONTINUED**

Resignation

If an employee wishes to leave the employ of the school district, a two week notice is required. Resignations should be submitted in writing to his\her supervisor indicating the anticipated termination date.

-Dismissal

Serious violations of school department policy will be cause for immediate discharge. Such violations include, but are not limited to; theft; dishonesty; insubordination; unauthorized absences; misuse of school department equipment; fighting; use or possession of illegal drugs, weapons or alcohol; breach of confidentiality.

Confidentiality

The employee may know or have access to confidential information. An employee is not to discuss confidential information with anyone including and not limited to fellow employees, family, or friends. The sharing of confidential information between employees as part of their professional responsibilities is exempt from this provision. Any violation of this provision will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Benefits Eligibility

To be eligible for benefits the employee must be employed in a regular full-time position.

Health Insurance

Recognizing the importance of comprehensive health and dental coverage, the Cranston School Department contributes the major portion of the cost of available insurance programs.

For the employee, the difference between the school department's contribution and the total premium cost will be deducted from his\her pay check. If the employee is required to make a premium contribution, he\she will be automatically enrolled in the district's pre-tax premium conversion plan, whereby the contribution is made before the payroll earnings are taxed. If the employee does not wish to have this arrangement, he\she has thirty (30) days to contact The Department of Human Resources. The employee's cost sharing will be set by the School Committee at the beginning of each fiscal year.

NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL 4213 Cont.d.

**NON-CERTIFIED SUPERVISORY AND CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE
POLICY CONTINUED**

COBRA

In compliance with federal law, an employee and their qualified beneficiaries covered under the school district's Group Health and Dental plans may elect to continue their coverage under the plan if their coverage ends due to certain events.

Worker's Compensation

The employee is covered by the school department's worker's compensation insurance. Payment of claim is calculated in accordance with applicable state laws. The employee is required to report an injury sustained on the job immediately to a supervisor. Failure to do so may jeopardize eligibility for the benefit. An incident report form can be obtained from Human Resources.

Group Life Insurance

The Cranston School Department will provide free Group Life Insurance. The amount of life insurance is based on the schedule of benefits for the Group Life Plan. The employee may purchase additional coverage through payroll deductions.

Pension

The employee is required to participate in The Rhode Island State Employees pension system.

Tax Sheltered Annuity Program

An employee of the district is eligible to participate in one of the school department’s several tax sheltered annuity programs.

Vacations, Holidays and Leaves

Employees are entitled to vacations, holidays and leaves as outlined below.

NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL 4213 Cont.d

NON-CERTIFIED SUPERVISORY AND CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE POLICY

Vacations

An employee is entitled to:

Length of Completed Service	Vacation Days
1 YEAR	5 DAYS
5 YEARS	10 DAYS
10 YEARS	15 DAYS
20 YEARS	20 DAYS

An employee, after one year of service, will receive one (1) recess

period as well as their earned vacation days.

Holidays

An employee is immediately eligible for paid holiday time. The list of holidays will be issued at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Paid Time for Illness

An employee will receive one sick day per month during the first year of employment and, on every anniversary, will receive fifteen days for the coming year. Sick time should be used only for legitimate illness of the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family (spouse, child, mother or father or other family members in the immediate household). Unused sick time will not accumulate. The employee may use up to three (3) sick days per year for personal business. Request for personal days should be scheduled at least seven (7) days in advance.

The employee will have a seventy-five (75) day long term ill bank which may be accessed after an employee has been out for five (5) consecutive work days or from the day of an inpatient hospitalization.

Any absence due to illness in excess of three (3) consecutive days will require a physician's note which will outline the reason for the illness, next evaluation and/or return date.

Leaves of Absence

The school district offers both paid and unpaid leaves of absence.

NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL 4213 Cont.d

NON-CERTIFIED SUPERVISORY AND CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE POLICY

Bereavement Days

This leave may be granted for a maximum of five (5) calendar days for the death in the immediate family (father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter, spouse, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, or other family members in the immediate household).

In case of death of a grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter, a leave may be granted for three (3) calendar days.

In the case of death of relatives by marriage or blood relatives not listed above, a leave of the day of the funeral will be granted.

Jury Duty

Should the employee be called to serve on a jury during a scheduled

work day, the school district will pay the regular wages for that day and the employee will be required to submit his\her compensation from the court system to the payroll department.

Military Reserve – If an employee is an active military reservist, and is required to serve two weeks active duty during the year, the employee will be eligible to receive the difference between his\her regular weekly pay and any weekly pay received from the Reserves. The employee will be required to produce a statement of earnings to the payroll department.

The employee may also qualify for the following unpaid leaves:

Military Duty – If the employee enlists or is drafted into any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, the employee may return to the district without intervening employment or beyond the maximum limit prescribed by state or federal law.

Medical Leave – After completion of the employee's probationary period, an unpaid medical leave may be granted up to one (1) year. A physician's certificate must be submitted with the request for leave to Human Resources.

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYEES HIRED AFTER 7/1/07.

Policy Adopted: August 20, 2007

Resolution No. 07-8-35

Policy Amended: CRANSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Resolution No.: Cranston, Rhode Island

**RHODE ISLAND ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER
SCIENCES**

**An Affiliate of the American Association of Family and Consumer
Sciences Post Office Box 10456, Cranston, Rhode Island 02910**

January 10,2008

Dear Cranston School Committee,

We have learned, with much dismay that you are considering the elimination of family and consumer sciences (PCS) on your middle school level. The members of the RI Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (RIAFCS) believe that this would be a detriment to the students in your district. We assert that family and consumer sciences programs reinforce and build academia skills through interactive programs that also teach critical life skills. These are every bit as important today as they have ever been, and, arguably, more critical today.

We are passionate about preparing students to live effectively as individuals, as family members, and as public citizens who are prepared to be a positive force within their communities. Family and consumer sciences courses are an essential part of the middle and high school curriculum, which reinforce the theories, principles, and practices of the basic academic courses of math, social studies, science, reading and writing. Family and consumer sciences courses tie these domains of knowledge together in an integrated and holistic manner to address the knowledge and practical skills needed by every student.

We all recognize the value of requiring courses in math, science, social studies, composition, literature, etc. Too frequently however, family and consumer sciences courses are viewed as electives and, therefore, less important than these core courses. We believe this is a narrow and short-sighted viewpoint. For instance.....

- Students must not only learn mathematics skills and principles but they must be able to apply them by balancing a checkbook and Grafting a budget to live within his or her means. Research has shown that the fastest growing segment of the population declaring bankruptcy falls between the ages of 20-25. Family and consumer sciences courses teach them to how to get the best value for their dollar through reading, analyzing and comparing for value pricing.**
- There is a well-documented national crisis in childhood obesity due in large measure to the elimination of family and consumer sciences programs that teach good nutrition and provide students with alternatives to the quick and easy availability of fast food. Family**

and consumer sciences courses also teach students to read and understand nutritional labels.

- Students must learn scientific principles, but also must have strong skills in problem solving and critical thinking. Virtually every career and life choice involves these vital skills and middle and high school students are at the prime stage of their lives to develop these abilities. Family and consumer sciences courses provide hands-on experiences as well as literature about various careers for students to read and discuss.

Empowering Individuals • Strengthening Families • Enabling Communities

- Students must be able to write in a clear and succinct manner, and they must also be able to construct a resume and a cover letter when applying for employment. Good writing begins with the ability to read and PCS courses stress good reading skills.

The list of life skills and how they reinforce the core curriculum could go on, but I think the point has been made. Pure academics without the integration of basic life knowledge and application of those skills falls woefully short of preparing a student for the realities of higher education, lifelong learning, employment, and family life.

With dual career families and single parent households, parents are time challenged or may even lack effective life management skills themselves to teach their children how to lead successful lives. We must honestly ask ourselves who is teaching our students about personal financial management, food and nutrition, appropriate and

flattering clothing and apparel, and creating an efficient and safe physical environment for their home. If we are to give our students the best chance of living a successful life, we must teach them how to budget and spend their money, how to shop wisely and dress appropriately for a variety of occasions, how to eat simply and nutritiously and how to make selections that give them the best value for their money, parenting and how to participate in society as a good citizen.

The family and consumer sciences curriculum helps students accomplish the daunting tasks of every day life. Is this really the right time to eliminate such a vital program? If there ever a good to time to consider eliminating this program? The answer resoundingly is NO. The alternative for our students is just too bleak to imagine.

As family and consumer sciences professionals, RIAFCS urges you to consider the need to ensure that the education of all students is well-balanced and inclusive of these critical life skills. I appreciate the opportunity to provide our position and trust that you incorporate these concerns hi your deliberations.

Sincerely,

/

Laurel Thayer RIAFCS President

Marie Birch

RIAFCS Executive Board Member

Empowering Individuals • Strengthening